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PARISH SERMONS

ON

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL SUBJECTS

FOR

All Sundays and Feasts of Obligation

WITHDRAWN

BY

REV. WALTER ELLIOTT

OF THE PAULIST FATHERS

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This book of Sermons is dedicated to the parish clergy as a token of my affection and gratitude. During many years I was their guest as a missionary to the Catholics and non-Catholics of their parishes. They did me innumerable favors, not the least being the profit I derived from the example they set me of devoted loyalty to Jesus Christ and His Church, and zeal for the salvation of souls. The desire to help them in fulfilling their divine vocation has been the principal cause of my venturing on the publication of these discourses.

PREFACE.

SERMONS of a lifetime might be the title of this volume, for the discourses are, nearly all of them, my notes for sermons and conferences during a long series of years, now revised and fitted together. In their time they served my purpose with the people only inadequately. And yet after going over them I have flattered myself that they might find a useful place—though a minor and temporary one—in current homiletic literature; in which hope others whose judgment I value have encouraged me.

They cover a wide field of pastoral preaching; explaining and enforcing the motives, rules, and practices of a good Catholic life. Moreover, they aim to advance the attractions, and to explain the principles of Christian perfection, quite within the comprehension and according to the state of life of the laity.

A glance at the table of contents shows, therefore, a great variety of topics. A glance here and there at the text will reveal, I trust, a plain and direct style of treatment: something for the tempted and the relapsing, the obstinate sinner and the timid weakling, the happy and the despondent, the suffering and those who minister to them; and something, too, now and then about making converts.

The book is, of course, offered primarily to the parish clergy. But it is hoped that these sermons may also serve a class of the laity for whom the author has ever cherished deep sympathy, namely, Catholics who are prevented from hearing Mass by living remote from a church, or who are house-bound by sickness or the care of the sick or of little children. In the South, especially, there are many detached families who enjoy the Catholic privilege of Mass, confession, and communion but very rarely, perhaps only once a year. If such dear exiled favorites of our Eucharistic Savior could but find these sermons a help to them in their lonely home devotions on Sundays, their author would receive the amplest compensation for his labor in preparing them.

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PARISH SERMONS

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

I. The Virtue of Hope.

"When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Holy Church would have us begin our devotional year with the divine virtue of hope. For although she reads us our Savior's prophecy of His return "to judge the world in equity and the people in justice" (Ps. ix. 9), yet she emphasizes the joy of all faithful hearts at meeting Him. Therefore has she chosen for the opening words of the Mass the inspiring prayer of the Psalmist: "To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul, in Thee, O my God, I put my trust" (Ps. xxiv. 1, 2).

Let us realize that God, on account of "the exceeding charity wherewith He loveth us" (Eph. ii. 4), is better pleased with hope than with fear in our service. God is more pleased with my repentance than He was angered by my sins. Hope is that quality of love which we call trustfulness, a trait exceedingly pleasing to our heavenly Father. St. Francis de Sales (*Love of God,* Book XI., ch. xvi.) compares the fear of God to a lady's embroidery needle: "The work is wrought with the needle, which, however, is not left in the satin, but is only inserted to draw in after it the silk, silver and gold threads for which it makes a way; and then it is withdrawn. Even so the divine goodness, wishing to embellish the soul with various forms of sacred love, makes use of the needle of servile fear, with which our hearts are ordinarily first pricked. But ever as love's virtues are drawn and fastened in the soul, servile fear departs, according to the word of the beloved disciple: 'Perfect charity casteth out fear'" (1 John iv. 18). As there is no embroidering without a needle, so there is no love (allowing for rare exceptions) without fear. But the needle is for the thread, not the thread for the needle. Fear is given us for the sake of hope and love and filial virtues of all kinds.

"I sleep, and my heart watcheth" (Cant. v. 2) murmurs the spouse of God. The soul's sleep is a tranquil yielding to God's will in the dispositions of His providence. Conscious of His loving care of us, we find holy peace in that feeling. The principal occupation of our inner life is a restful advertence to God's love. Repose is the characteristic trait of a soul entirely persuaded that God is its ever-faithful guardian. Now against this rises up the memory of our sins—perhaps as yet unconfessed and unforgiven. But what a boon! Our Judge is our Redeemer. What a comfort! His is a nature easily and quickly moved to pity. This thought is often the conclusive argument for repentance. The worst sinners are not the most brutish, but rather the most proud. And they are a class whose intelligence revolts against a long continuance of rebellion against their heavenly Father.

At the end of the Middle Ages began the wonderful era of modern discoveries by the passage to the East Indies by sea. And Vasco da Gama, the navigator, named the southernmost point of the African continent, around which his venturesome ships turned into the India Ocean, the Cape of Good Hope. So does a penitent sinner turn into great vistas of joy, once he doubles the dark continent of terror, with its frowning cliffs of hesitation and despondency. Good Hope! Good Hope! And beyond lies our spiritual Eldorado, bright seas studded with golden isles of peace and joy.

The day of judgment is a day of wrath indeed, but read how Thomas à Kempis would have us prepare for it: "Cling to God as thy Father, to Jesus as thy Brother, to Mary as thy Mother, to the angels as thy friends, to the saints as thy kinsfolk. Of that noble and exalted stock dost thou come, not by natural birth, but by the spiritual freedom 'wherewith Christ hath made us free' (Gal. iv. 31). Surrounded by protectors such as these;

with loving patrons such as these ready at thy call, thou mayest in confidence await the coming of the day of doom, and hope for mercy at the hands of thy most loving Savior" *(Meditations on the Life of Christ).*

How calmly did the martyrs bear stripes, rackings, fire, and death. There was not a quaver of doubt as they answered the pagan judges: Though you hew us in pieces we will not deny Christ. Why cannot I be like-minded towards the temptations which beset me, for what are they compared to the might of Jesus Christ which supports me in my resistance to them. Nor shall I be disheartened because I come late. St. Cyprian was on the borders of old age when he was converted from paganism, and he hurried on to perfection, and was a saint long before he became a martyr.

"Many," says Père Lallemant, "never arrive at perfection because they do not hope sufficiently." A mysterious doctrine arousing misgivings; for one may mistake presumption for hope. Yet there are a thousand such teachings, which make not only perfection but salvation itself dependent on hope. Many are lost with faith undimmed, but none are lost with genuine trust in God, for it borrows charity's inalienable prerogatives: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever" (Ps. xxx. 2).

It is not fair treatment of God for a man to exclaim against his own sinfulness without immediately saluting God's compassion: O God, I am a most miserable sinner, and Thou art the infinite perfection of mercy. A true penitent, to be sure, never gets over his amazement at his former sinfulness; but shall he ever cease being amazed at God's mercy? As much as you are sinful so much does God need to be merciful, and He never fails to do His needful part in the work of our salvation.

Why shall I be saved? Because this is the will of God, my salvation, yea, and my sanctification (1 Thess. iv. 3). To Jesus Christ it is of the highest importance that I should be saved, His sweetest joy, His most glorious triumph. Again: Why shall I be saved? Because I will it. O my God, "I have sworn and I am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice" (Ps. cxviii. 106). To gain Paradise is my highest interest, my sternest duty, my only joy, my most glorious triumph. Jesus and my own self are thus jointly concerned in my eternal happiness: surely we shall not fail. O wonderful dignity of man! He can save himself, and he can do it efficaciously because God enables him to do it. Jesus, Thou art the corner stone (1 Cor. iii. 11) of my hope in all my works; they are every one more Thine than mine; Thine by right of inspiration, of merit, and of final perseverance; and yet Thou makest them mine.

Of His second coming, so much dwelt upon by Holy Church during this devout time, Jesus says in the Apostle's vision: "Behold I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Apoc. iii. 11). Two good thoughts are here vouchsafed us, thoughts for perseverance. First, that the Lord will come soon, for so splendid a boon as His coming is always soon. To one who has "in mind the eternal years" (Ps. lxxvi. 6) any length of time is soon come and gone. The other thought is resoluteness. Grasp with thy whole power the honor of God committed to thee in His commandments and His Church and Gospel, and hold it fast against thy own passions and the suggestions of the treacherous demon: "Behold I come quickly." Sometimes, O Lord, it is Thy justice, and at other times Thy mercy, that rules my heart: misery and happiness by turns are mine. But both feelings are full of love, for it always is Thyself that I have in mind. And also on Thy part, O Jesus; sometimes my sinfulness, sometimes my little bit of penance, seems to engage Thy thoughts about me. But it is always Thyself and myself, the Redeemer and the redeemed; and Thy whole endeavor—O how sweet a joy it must be to Thee—is to bring us two eternally together into one.

But that scare which you felt at your last confession, and which was so well grounded and so beneficial—so you might ask—ought it not to be established as the usual condition? God does not make it so. But it should not be forgotten. Only let its work be that of a memory, and the work of holy hope the ever-present energy of your spirit. "They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaias xl. 31).

We hear of "the question of questions" in affairs of moment political or financial. St. Francis de Sales says that despondency is the temptation of temptations. As a matter of fact discouragement reduces one to a nerveless condition. Of a gloomy Christian it may be said that even his piety is a pious kind of despair. On the other hand, a buoyant religious feeling grows strong amid anxieties, just as the oak tree toughens its fibre and spreads its branches in the gales of stormy winter. The venerable Sister Mary of the Divine Heart, when placed in charge of the Good Shepherd Convent in Oporto, finding herself thrust into the worst possible financial difficulties, took up her account book and wrote at the head of the first page the words of the Psalmist we have already quoted: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, I shall not be confounded forever." In that joyful courage she went on, and she was not confounded but exceedingly successful. So may I do when I feel conscious of my weaknesses. And when my memory opens the account book of my general confession, I will write hope upon it everywhere. The servant of God we have named found in her temporal needs what she and all of us may much more surely trust to find in our spiritual ones. "And the king said to the man of God: What will then become of the hundred talents, which I have given to the soldiers of Israel? And the man of God answered him: The Lord is rich enough to be able to give thee much more than this" (2 Par. xxv. 9). God is "rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. x. 12).

The genesis of hope as a saving grace is in the inward consciousness of love; but that is hope at its best. For even when love is not inward at all, and when every outward or spoken act of love is but feigned and is empty of inwardness, being that of a downright sinner, yet hope, like the idly flopping sails of a ship becalmed, spreads its dim yearning arms towards the mercy of God, and awaits the breath of His grace to stir the soul to repentance.

Looking at a beastly sinner, it is hard to realize that he yet has some nobility of nature. But the dignity of a penitent is so great that Christ Crucified would have a converted harlot the principal attendant of His Immaculate Mother on Calvary. This is an incentive to holy hope in the breast of any sinner however foul. For of which of them may it be said, as it was of Magdalene, that seven devils had been cast out of him? (Mark xvi. 9.) The whole world is filled with truly devout souls, who years ago began to serve God after a genuine miracle of conversion. This has been due to the abounding courage granted us at a good confession, taking the form of holy resolutions for amendment. St. Francis de Sales compares good resolutions to the cloister of a monastery, in which one enters to escape the contagion of vice: "Keep closely," he writes, "my dear child, within the cloister of your sacred resolutions. They will keep your heart if your heart keeps them with humility and confidence in God" (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 113).

Great is the need of the divine virtue of hope, for it is the virtue of comfort. We sometimes feel little need of consolation, living, as we do, holily and happily in the land of promise, which is fertile of good things, and in which the wheat of joy blooms and ripens with the return of the seasons. But our Israel soon suffers a change. The way of our spirit becomes the weary road of exile, and our sojourn is upon the rivers of Babylon where we sit and weep at the memory of Sion (Ps. cxxxvi. 1), oppressed with the sense of guilt and of impotency for good; perhaps with a tendency to despair. Then hope comes to the rescue, a virtue which is another name for love trustfully offered to God amidst pains and troubles. In the contradictions of life the soul's comfort is interior retirement and trust in providence. The Holy Spirit says: "In silence and in hope shall your strength be" (Isaias xxx. 15).

II. The Importance of Salvation.

"For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

The season of Advent, my brethren, is full of the admonitions of Holy Church that we set about saving our souls. Salvation: is it not the one great, permanent, everlasting good thing? Indeed all else is but a dream, and often a very bad dream. "We shall never come to understand life," says St. Teresa, "till we know what is the great reality, and what is of no account" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, ch. xv., 4). What leads to eternal joy is the great reality; all else is of no account. If I should win the favor of all the men in the world, what help would that be towards my eternal happiness? Nay, it might be the cause of my downfall. How often are the Apostle's words made true by bitter experience: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. i. 10).

If I owned the gold in all the banks in the world, that vast wealth of money would avail me nothing for a happy death; indeed it would most probably lessen my chances for salvation. What we need for salvation is not the world and its wealth and its favors, but sorrow for our sins and love for Jesus Christ. It is a saying of Fénelon, that the world may intoxicate our hearts, but it never can satisfy them. After that intoxication the soul feels the reaction of terrors, and forebodings, and sometimes despair. Our souls are made for God alone, and He alone can save them. No, it is not this poor perishing earth that is destined to be united forever to the soul of man, but the Spirit of the infinite God—united in "justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). And that Spirit of God you will find dwelling in your innermost soul if you will turn away from worldly things and seek for Him there.

There your prayers place you in the divine heart itself; there in your own immortal soul is the heavenly Father that created you; the loving Redeemer that died for you; the Holy Spirit that sanctifies you. After thus communing with God in your interior, you may turn to the same God in your outward life. In a good confession the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses away your sins, and bestows upon you the spirit of holy fear and of trustful love. Holy Communion gives you the humanity of the Son of God in real and perfect possession, making your life His own. After such intimate contact with the Deity Itself, how different will this passing show of a world seem. You will then better understand our Lord's description of its final destruction; and you can exclaim joyfully with the prophet: "I beheld the earth, and, lo! it was void and nothing; and the heavens, and there was no light in them" (Jer. iv. 23).

Once a sinful young man had an interview with St. Philip Neri. The Saint looked intently at him, and he read the sad state of his soul as he would read a book—and then he burst into tears. The young man was astonished and much distressed. But St. Philip tenderly embraced him, and said to him: "O my son! do not resist the Holy Ghost; God wishes to save you." He was moved to repentance and made his confession, and was no doubt saved. So does Holy Church always treat us and speak to us, but especially during Advent. Shall we not hearken to her exhortations? But such advice is not seldom rejected, whether given by the Church through her priest, or by one's own friends; nay it is sometimes despised, even hated. Whom does a delirious sick man most hate? The very physician and nurse who are striving to save his life. There are men in this parish who are so delirious with wickedness, that, although they may not cherish hate, yet they have a positive aversion for the faithful friends who have for years strived in vain to save them from eternal death. And worse yet, they meanwhile have a positive affection for those companions whose whole influence is exerted to hinder their eternal salvation.

In a case where your limbs, health, body, life are at stake, you hesitate not a moment; you value nothing in comparison. No power on earth can prevent you; you must preserve your body from destruction. O how different when it is a question of your soul, a forbidden society, a sinful custom of amusement. Even now you may be holding back from what you know to be the only true faith of Christ for the sake of pleasing your family. *They* are preferred to the preservation of your soul from destruction. Wonderful, deplorable blindness! Such eagerness, such industry, such energy about perishable things, often the merest trifles; such indifference to one's best and highest interests. This is that same spiritual paralysis which our Lord bewailed in the Jews: "For the heart of this people is grown gross, and with their ears they have been dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. xiii. 15). We once overheard two friends saying their good-bye to each other as they parted, and one of them added these words: "Be good to yourself." This is not a religious expression, my brethren, but it surely is sound sense: Be good to yourself. And who is so good to himself as one who saves his soul from eternal pain. We have but to add a Christian word or two to make it a perfect salutation: Be good to yourself, and I pray God to be good to you.

When the Apostles were in danger of shipwreck, they cried out, "Lord, save us: we perish" (Matt. viii. 25). So may each of us pray to Him, all the time, for danger is seldom far off: "O Lord Jesus Christ, save me, save my soul. It is more Thine than mine, for Thou hast created it and died for it. O now I beseech Thee to save it from the many enemies who are striving to wreck it—my evil passions, the follies of the world, the snares of the devil." "I am Thine, save Thou me!" (Ps. cxviii. 94.) "Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise and cast us not off to the end. Why turnest Thou Thy face away and forgettest our want and our trouble? For our soul is humbled down to the dust" (Ps. xliii. 23-25). Let such prayers as these inspired words, my brethren, be on your lips and in yours hearts these days of preparation for our Lord's coming among us to save us.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

I. Simplicity of Life.

"But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments?"—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Our Redeemer by these words praises John the Baptist. Later on in this discourse He describes him as an angelic man, "a prophet and more than a prophet." Jesus loved and, as it were, revered him, because of his virtues, and especially because he had been chosen by the Holy Ghost to prepare the way for Him. Our Savior singles out John's austere simplicity of life for His more emphatic commendation, to lead us to imitate, at least in spirit, his self-denial. For John appeared not wearing "soft garments," but rather a "garment of camel's hair" (Matt. iii. 4); and he was averse to high company and to the palaces of kings. This spirit and all this manner of life were our Redeemer's own. He was most plainly clad; He never entered a king's house, except when dragged into Herod's court by Pilate's soldiers. All sumptuous was that abode of luxury and of vice. All silent and sad was He Who stood there shamed and blasphemed; mocked and hooted at, and His adornment was a white cloth of mockery thrown over His torn and muddy clothes. No wonder that such a Master should praise the self-denial of John. No wonder Holy Church bids us meditate on self-denial during the Advent season.

This is a severe rebuke to many of us, my brethren, and well deserved. We dislike, nay we resent, being classed among the poor. Yet our Lord gave up the very riches of heaven to become a poor man and the Son of a poor woman. So does a true Christian live always among the poor, at any rate in his sympathies. Fellowship, at least in spirit, with those who are in actual want, is of the essence of God's religion. Thus did the elder Tobias teach his son: "Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy, and with thy garments cover the naked" (Tob. iv. 17). Our vocation, even by Baptism, is essentially restrictive of excess in dress, lodging, food, and indeed of all extravagance in the use and ownership of worldly goods. If Providence has put us in a state of dependence we are not to grumble. It pleases God if we are cheerfully content to be beholden to others for our subsistence, for we are disciples of Him, Who by no robbery, but by divinest title, calls Himself "the equal with God, and yet emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 6, 7). The state of life of those who are masters of the means of support, is essentially different from that of those who are dependent upon others. Of these two states the latter is our Savior's choice for His special friends, as it was for Himself and His mother.

In arithmetic there are four great tables, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Of these, says St. Bonaventure, the man of God dislikes addition and abhors multiplication; as to division, he favors that when it parcels out his goods to make others happy; and as to subtraction, he looks forward to the final and total loss of all his earthly substance to be exchanged for the "treasure in heaven, which faileth not; where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth" (Luke xii. 33).

Meantime consider that even in this life there is compensation: detachment of mind is conducive to a sense of spiritual ownership vast and delightful. John the Baptist was master of men and things more truly than was Tiberius Cæsar, who ruled the world in that day; for John held dominion over all the universe in trust for Christ and for God. When one for God's love has no desire of earthly ownership, he begins to share in God's sovereign dominion. "All things are yours," exclaims the Apostle," whether it be Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; for all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). Says Scheeben in commenting on this text: "The saints are ours to assist us; life is ours to make us happy in God; death to bring us to Him; the present to serve our necessities; the future is something upon which we already have a claim; the world is ours because it is subject to us and was created for us" (*Glories of Grace,* Book IV., ch. i.).

The simplicity of the Baptist's life was based on his whole-hearted acceptance of the right relationship of man to God, as expressed ages before by blessed Job, who, when he was despoiled of all, "fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said: Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job i. 20, 21). The true life of a man is the fulfilling of God's purpose with him—little else should concern him.

Meantime the toilers of this world and those who are stricken with misfortune are in Job's class, and in the Baptist's, and in Christ's. To the toilers and the wretched our best fellowship is due. St. Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow and martyr, kept a list of all the widows and distressed persons in his diocese—a memorandum, as he said, of distinguished friends. In our times the discontent of those who are scantily provided for is a menace to good order. Therefore when we defend the rights of property let us emphasize the first and foremost right of property, which is to give it away in charity. We should then join to that right the duty of exercising it. It is unbecoming in a Christian to express admiration for wealth, luxury, elegance, but just the reverse, for if any vainglory can be guileless, it is our pride in being fellow-toilers with Jesus Christ. St. Thomas, of Villanova, being archbishop of a rich diocese distributed everything to the poor. When he came to die, having actually given away all he owned except his bed, he then gave that away too, choosing for his beneficiary over all others the city jailer, to whom he gave his deathbed in trust for the use of his prisoners, borrowing it himself meantime till he should be dead. He that would judge things according to real values, "must form great ideas of God and little ideas of the world," affirms Père Surin in one of his Spiritual Letters.

We are born into this world with a powerful instinct to love: Originally it was subject to reason, and rightly ordered, but our fallen nature tends to a disordered love. Rightly we should love the all-loveable God as the only thing worthy of a love truly enlightened. But our soul, full of error, tainted with corrupt longings, returns upon itself and loves itself, and that inordinately; hates its neighbor who thwarts its self-interest; loves the applause of men as if men were angels; and easily yields to a tendency to love and enjoy brutish pleasures. Meanwhile and always the infinite Good, Who loves us perfectly, calls constantly for our love in return for His. But He and His love are forgotten. Speaking of the attractions of this perishing world, St. Francis de Sales admonishes us: " Let us never look at what it offers, without considering what it hides " (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 1). It offers us this passing life and hides from us life eternal.

Of actual poverty we see many examples. Some are tramps, half rogues, indeed, but miserably poor. Some are in almshouses, cast out from ordinary human existence, and cared for, after a fashion, by the civil community. Some of the needy are better off, being cared for by organized Christian charity. Not a few others are always on the verge of utter destitution, just not totally down and out. There are families living from hand to mouth. Do you happen to be the confidant of the father of such a family? He tells you that everything is mortgaged. " The interest eats up every penny. To us the most dreadful being on earth is the sheriff. The vital question with my wife every day is—the next meal. What we are to do next week I don't know. No coal. Winter is close, and yet I have pawned my overcoat. Our trouble comes from the sickness of our big boy—and the expense of the funeral. The groceryman won't trust us any more; he threatens a lawsuit. Which way to turn now I can't imagine. I am tired of trying to borrow. Our home—it is as good as lost. I am tired of looking for a better job of work. The little girl must leave school and go into the mill—if she can get a place there."

So fare the poor. Of their state of life in all its dreary varieties the Son of the living God said these words: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke vi. 20). And of others who reverence and desire a like condition of want for love of Him, and because He chose it for Himself, He says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3). A strangely exacting Master is He, Who desires so much of the penury of His followers. His foremost missionary interprets Him by a bold maxim: "A faithful saying. For if we are dead with Him we shall live also with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. ii. 12). Does it not sound like a passionate profession of allegiance, this "faithful" or trustworthy saying? When we speak emphatically of the death of anyone, we say: "What! haven't you heard? Yes, he is dead, dead and buried; its old news by this time. He is gone long ago." And so we dismiss him. We once talked much of his death, then we talked of his funeral—and now we have begun to forget him. Can we say such things of our ancient and wicked self? dead? and buried? and almost forgotten? living things of virtue and of love of Christ exclusively engaging our attention? Such is the meaning of the Apostle's faithful and trustworthy saying, that to live with Christ is to be dead to the love of worldly plenty and ease.

We recall the holy self-denial of the Venerable Joseph Benedict Cottolengo, even on his deathbed. A cup of broth was offered him, but, says his biographer, "he turned away from it, saying that for many years he had not tasted such a fine drink, and would not begin now." Another example: that heroic servant of God, Bishop Frederick Baraga, the apostle of the Chippewa Indians, while attending the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1867 had a fit of apoplexy—being then an old man, and near his end. As he fell down he struck his head and cut it severely, and for a while was unconscious. As he revived he was offered a little whiskey to drink. He smelt it, and he refused it, saying: "For more than thirty years I have kept my temperance pledge, and I will not break it now." Such acts of self-denial are more admirable than imitable—perhaps. But they remind us of One concerning Whose last hours it is said: "And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but He took it not" (Mark xv. 23). And Holy Church is now leading us closer and closer to the celebration of His birthday, in order to give us the privilege of mingling with the shepherds, and of sharing with them the message of the angel, giving them the tokens for identifying the new-born Savior: "And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger" (Luke ii. 12).

Read the chronicles of the first ages of our religion. You will find it was the universal counsel of the Church that all Christians should fast as much as their health allowed—that is what it meant those times to be a true Christian. And there can be no manner of doubt but that this spirit of self-denial of the early Christians was imbibed from Christ through His blessed Apostles. And now? Keep the commandments, indeed; but as to anything beyond that—monthly Communion is made to take the place of all Christian perfection, including mortification. As far as common practice goes, the austerity of the Gospel is lost. What is the effect on me of reading the sublime history of the martyrs? Practically considered (so speaks a candid Christian), I have a faint feeling of pious envy for those heroes and nothing more. But the desire of actual martyrdom was the common sentiment of my forefathers in the Faith: they were brought up that way. What holy longings do I feel? None at all, usually. The best I can do is to offer to those heroes of Christ a distant reverence barren of any tribute of imitation. My life is like a wheat field in California in a dry year: the wheat stands thick, it is lovely to the eye. But it is only straw, for the wheat, whilst in the milk, has been shrunk and withered by the heat. To correct this spiritual drought, Holy Church offers us the season of Advent with its lessons of self-denial.

II. The Virtue of Faith.

"Watch, stand fast in faith, do manfully" (1 Cor. xvi. 13).

Christian faith, my brethren is a threefold action of God upon our souls. Wiseman's definition, which but echoes in familiar terms the teaching of Holy Church (see his *Lectures on the Rule of Faith*), gives us three inseparable elements of this great primary virtue.

First. God's revelation to men, embracing the things to be believed, mainly contained in the Sacred Scriptures, but including also the divine traditions witnessed by the early Christian Fathers.

Second. God's Church, which Christ established among men as the public tribunal of truth, safeguarding revelation by divine right, explaining its meaning infallibly, and enforcing its profession and the observance of its precepts.

Third. God's interior aid for the personal understanding of revealed truth and for steadfast adhesion of the mind to its verities: this is known as the grace of faith. It is a secret influence essentially divine. It does not simply throw light on our creeds and our Scriptures, but it bends our wills to an affectionate attitude toward them and toward the Church. It includes reverence as well as appreciation; and it places the sacred books, and the Holy Church which has them in custody, deep in our hearts' affections. And it adds the quality of unshaken loyalty to the convictions of the intelligence. This is the strictly personal, private quality of Catholic Faith, and it is needful to understand it if we would know what is meant by the crime of apostasy. It is this third element that sets up God's authority in our conscience; this it is that is mortally wounded by the sin of unbelief in a baptized Catholic.

As to the trials of faith, we read in the *Life of St. Vincent de Paul* (Bougaud, Book I., ch. iii.), the following incident: There was then in Paris a doctor of theology so violently tempted against the Faith that he could no longer say Mass, recite his office, or enter a church. Even the thought of God provoked him to blasphemy. St. Vincent vainly tried every means to cure him. Finally by a special movement of grace he offered himself to God to bear the victim's dreadful burden, and his prayer was heard. While joy and peace were returning to the tempted priest's mind, St. Vincent was sinking into the abyss of doubt and darkness from which he had rescued his friend. Almost his only relief was the act of faith, which he made, blindly and almost in despair, many times each day, having written it out and placed it in his clothing next his heart. For four years he suffered this agony of doubt. One day, more dejected than usual, he fell on his knees before God, and vowed to consecrate his life to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. Instantly his soul was restored to perfect peace. He declared that ever after that he saw the truths of faith in the purest light. It is thus that God trains the higher order of souls for an apostolate of faith inspired by charity.

As of old, so must it be now; they who do great deeds for God's truth must deeply sympathize with the acute woes of temptation against faith. "Holy faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions" (Heb. xi. 33-35). To proclaim a triumph without a conflict is unbecoming a soldier. "In my abundance I said: I shall never be moved" (Ps. xxix. 7). O God, if it be Thy will that I must battle for a tranquil faith, I beg Thee to lead me in the conflict. Be Thine alone the victory!

The divine Master gives us the only essential rule of the eloquence of faith, when He says: "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke vi. 45). No man ever lived and loved who could not be eloquent in praise of his beloved. Belief rooted in an experience of prayer and good works, sacraments and penance, is lifted into the pulpit of divine mastery of hearts. "I believed, therefore did I speak" (Ps. cxv. 1) tells of a speech that is the overflow of the soul's affection for truth and for its divine teacher. The reward of such a faith is an eloquent tongue and the sweet victories of missionary conversation. But contrariwise, the lack of love in a professing but non-practical Catholic is punished with a blight of silence, and the liability to be sorely tempted against the Faith. Zachary was no such cold-hearted servant of God; and yet because he doubted the angel's message, it was said to him: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak, until the day when these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words" (Luke i. 20).

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

I. Pride.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Again does our holy mother the Church teach us our Advent lesson in the words of St. John the Baptist, bidding us prepare our souls for the birth of our Savior at Christmas. John dealt with all classes of men, "Jerusalem and all Judea and all the country about the Jordan" (Matt. iii. 5), giving him a vast auditory, and for each and all he had a word of warning.

But to the race-proud and self-righteous Pharisees he was particularly attentive, because they were leaders and misleaders of the more devout Israelites. He called them a "brood of vipers," and menaced them with "the wrath to come" (Matt. iii. 7). Brethren, you know that the notorious vice of these men was pride in its various forms, a vice which in good living people appropriates the honor of virtuous actions, robbing God of His rights. Does that come near to you? Perhaps. At any rate, a good test is whether or not you will take home to yourself the admonition of John, or fall under the Scriptural ban: "He that hateth reproof is foolish" (Prov. xii. 1).

The opposite virtue is that wise self-knowledge known as humility, thus defined by the holy brother Giles, one of the first disciples of St. Francis: "Blessed is he who accounts himself as mean and base before men as he is before God." As God knows me, I am what I am. As men know me, I am what I am not. In case I go by men's estimate of me or my own, the sharp questioning of the prophet is applied to me: "Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv. 3.) In many a one the growth of religion is stunted by a secret love of the esteem of men. Sometimes this becomes so preposterous that one is glad of being credited with certain good traits he does by no means possess. Only later on does he realize that his consciousness has been irrigated by a subterranean stream of vainglory. And if, perchance, our real defects are noticed by a discriminating friend, we retaliate by secret censoriousness against him. A humble man, on the contrary, acknowledges and even profits from his defects, and sometimes greatly. The knowledge of them deepens his contrition, humility being the foundation of that needful state of mind—a sense of shame, a disenchantment with self. Instead of vexing ourselves because our neighbor is thus and so in his imperfection, we humble ourselves because we find reasons to believe that we cannot stand comparison with him.

There are men whose lives are without change except for the passing of one humiliation to give place to another—an unbroken series of humiliating happenings and disappointments and chagrins; a variety of sorrows but no cessation. Now it is hard to believe but it is true: such a life is a blessing of a high order; even among the saints it is a special privilege to be constantly humbled. So much so that when God serves His own interests by a holy man's high outward repute among men, He serves the eternal welfare of this favorite of His by a ceaseless recurrence of *interior* self-degradations. When Blessed John of Avila was at the point of death, a priest began to recite passages of Scripture suitable for the last hours of a man of such learning and piety. "O my beloved friend," said the dying Saint "repeat not such words for me, but rather say the prayers you use to console criminals on the gallows."

He was answered: " We speak to them of the mercy of God, and we bid them trust in the merits of Christ Crucified." "Ah!" exclaimed John, "speak a great deal of that to me."

Our Savior inculcated this spirit by His well-known example of a child. "Amen, I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it" (Mark x. 15). And in that spirit did the mass of St. John the Baptist's hearers receive his loud proclamation: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2). They were fearful yet affectionate; curious about everything as children are, yet not doubting; much honored by his invitation to the divine kingdom, proud of it, immensely reverent of it, yet regarding it with deep humility. This is evident in the whole life of a religious man. Especially it generates his acceptance of the admonitions of friends, the guidance of superiors and the inspirations of grace; and these make up the inner and outer totality of God's kingdom. We are not to receive religious influences as grown men having rights, but as children wholly dependent on our heavenly Father and His messengers. Herein is guaranteed tenderness of sentiment as well as safe and sure conviction of God's favor, as says the Psalmist: "The Lord is the keeper of little ones; I was humbled and he delivered me" (Ps. cxiv. 6).

St. Bernard says of the proud archheretic Abelard, that he knew everything in heaven and earth except himself. To know oneself is a corrective of vanity. Humility is based on a knowledge of facts, that bundle of facts that each one's life is. Facts are the bane of pride. Dilating on this virtue that energetic and plain spoken woman, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, asks: "With whom did Jesus Christ converse? With a traitor, who sold Him at a cheap rate; with a thief, who but a moment before reviled Him; with sinners and with proud and insulting Pharisees. Ah, then, shall we take offence at every little affront or even contradiction?" In line with this is the following: There was once a Trappist monk named Columbano. It is related of him that, although a man of great holiness, he yet harbored one feeling of envy. He bore a holy envy towards those whom he saw rebuked by the Father Abbot.

But John's message, like that of all missionaries to God's rebellious children, was not humility alone; it was also one of fear. Now consider what was the effect of the message of the Son of God Himself upon Saul of Tarsus, a type of perfect spiritual arrogance. St. Luke tells us: "Trembling and amazed he said: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) When the Baptist's voice shook the desert of Judea like the roar of a lion, many a foul sinner was thus terrified. As a usual rule the pride of man is not so much softened as it is overthrown by divine influences. And how very necessary is this, for pride it is that inspires the more radical kinds of wickedness. Audacity in dealing with God, defiance of His threats, presumption of His mercy, tempting God, obstinacy and boastfulness in sinning, every manner of delay of repentance—all of these forms of flying in the face of God are just only varieties of pride.

The water dripping continuously from the roof of a cavern deposits a stony matter, which in course of time cakes hard and strong. So does continuous sin gradually leave its deposit in our souls; and we speak of a hopeless sinner as hardened and obdurate. Time spent in sin is time spent in casing the soul in an armor of resistance to grace. Influences that once were potent for good are become in course of years like remedies wasted on a sick man whose very bones are infected with disease. Earlier and later sins combine by evil memories and deep-seated habits to nullify divine influences. This extends even unto old age, as the holy man Job teaches: "The sins of his youth are in the old man's bones, and they shall sleep with him in the dust" (Job xx. 11). But there are manifestations of God's wrath which amaze and confound even the most obstinate sinner. "Are not my words as a fire, said the Lord, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. xxiii. 29.) John's words pulverized the stony hearts of many of his hearers, and they do the same to this day, as they are uttered in tones of thunder by God's Church. She thereby enables us to cultivate the fear of God as a preparation for the love of God, which is to stream so abundantly upon us at Christmas.

In this she is a good mother to us. St. Francis de Sales was a veritable apostle of the love of God. Yet when he was near death, and his attendants asked him for a last word to keep as a motto, he said: "Maintain mutual charity among yourselves, and live in and practice the fear of God." It is a dreadful thought, that of all the souls in hell this moment, there is scarcely one that ever felt he was likely to go there. They thought as little of damming themselves as any sinner now listening to my words, or as one of the Pharisees whom John menaced, saying: "For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire" (Luke iii. 9). It is vain to say that one who is a Catholic is safe enough; the means of salvation are always at hand—the Catholic faith and the sacraments; equally vain to say that sinners are always being pardoned and saved; or to think like this: why cannot I repent at any time I choose? The answer to all this delusion is that God appoints the time of repentance, not the sinner. "If to-day you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. xciv. 8). His voice is ever sounding in the reproaches of conscience. The sight of sinners being forgiven, the very thing that emboldens the impenitent to risk delay, is a powerful warning against delay. When God says "To-day," who art thou, O sinner, that darest say, "No! not to-day but to-morrow or some other day of my own choosing?" Remember the words of St. Peter: "Who was I that could withstand God?" (Acts xi. 17.) At a later day the sinner's soul may be so blinded by his passions as to be unable to see the signal of approaching danger, or so weakened by his evil habits as to be powerless to escape. And, O my brethren, any divine call may be the last.

Let not yours be the excuses and subterfuges of stubborn sinners. One alleges the power of his passions. Another says that in such bad surroundings as are now his no one can be good. Yet another boldly affirms that he is no worse than some who pretend to be virtuous—boasting that at any rate he is no hypocrite. And one and all they assume that they will repent later on, and that they must not be hurried and badgered. Whatever else, my brethren, may ail these sinners, and hard sinners generally, delay is the vice of them all. Sin is a malady whose pain is intolerable without the soothing medicine of this futile self-promise. And meanwhile sin is the regular enjoyment of their life. Its ways are year by year better explored, its dangers less and less considered. It occupies hours and hours of thought, it is planned, it is talked about, it is persuaded and urged upon others—and yet a little feeble thread of promise of a future reform is the only prospect of escaping hell. And realize this: it may be that faith is being undermined, the infection of vice spreading its poison even into religious convictions, as it has already rotted religious conduct. Or despair fiercely enters like a demon and dispossesses presumptuous hope; despair, which is the shadow of advancing wrath. O Lord our God! "May we find Thy mercy, and in a contrite and humble spirit may we be accepted" (Dan. iii. 39). I bid you, O sinful soul, to arise at once and return to your Father (Luke xv. 20). Prepare immediately for confession. Promise God in the words of the prophet: "I will declare against myself my iniquities unto the Lord, and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sins" (Ps. xxxi. 5).

II. Truthfulness.

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (Eph. vi. 14).

A superior quality of truthfulness is hereby inculcated, my brethren, a militant and aggressive quality, making each of us heroes of honest thinking and plain speaking. An open character is pleasing to God, and exceedingly so to men. A man whose point of honor is keen and bright is made of the right stuff for a Christian, and can easily become an apostle.

We are classed among men and angels by our use of God's truth. It is with us as it was with "a belted knight" in the days of chivalry. Our point of honor is truthfulness. Our sensitive nerve is the truth. The soldier of Christ says, "I will never give up my sword." What sword? "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. vi. 17). I will never change swords with the enemy. In conversing about religion I will never use any other sword but God's, namely, right reason, sacred Scripture, Catholic doctrine. In talking of secular affairs I will always express my real meaning. This is my rule for public discourse as well as for private conversation. In all kinds of speech, absolute truthfulness, candor, openness, "yea, yea, and nay, nay" (Matt. v. 37), the equation of mind and tongue. Would that such consistency were characteristic of all Catholics. It shall be so of me.

First the belt and sword, then the man who is worthy to be girt about—belted and armed with truth. Sometimes a sword is presented to a young officer, which is his sword of hope for he is beginning, and by its means he may do noble deeds and become a hero. Afterwards a sword of honor is presented to him: he has done his deeds of daring. Honor and valor have won the prize, he has proved himself worthy of his cause, and he has imparted a priceless worth to his sword. And shall it not be the same with the soldier of the cross? It is the truth that enables me and makes me worthy to expound it. By the truth I am transformed into the likeness of the Son of God (2 Cor. iii. 18). Girt about with the truth means enwrapped with God's love of the light and Christ's zeal to enlighten darkened souls.

In all our private intellectual life we must be true; forming our convictions according to Christ's Gospel, shaping them under the influence of a faithful Catholic spirit. In all our active life we must be equally true, making faith the light of conscience and the sense of duty. In the midst of false talk, we must be alert, vigilant and fearless for the truth, our minds inspired by God's rights, wrestling valiantly either with enemies of the Faith in flesh and blood, or with the invisible spirits of wickedness, the principalities and powers and "rulers of the world of this darkness" (Eph. vi. 12).

Our strength is clearness and accuracy of knowledge, and resolute courage in the profession of our belief, as contrasted with hesitancy. Our inspiration is love of truth and zeal to advance it, as contrasted with the spirit of expediency. Expediency is good in its place, but it is never an inspiration; it can only be a mode of action. Expediency applies to policy, never to doctrine. It is an economy of circumstances, never a license to choose between affirming or denying truth.

Curiosity about religious things should not be merely intellectual, like that about a disputed fact of history or a deduction of scientific research: not like Pilate's. He asked the prime question of all philosophy: "What is truth?" (John xviii. 38.) And yet he cared only to know how safely to shirk the responsibility of his office. Mere inquisitiveness about religion is apt to be the trait of an idle mind; and it may be that of a degenerate one, as in the case of Pilate. Inquiry must have a savor of devotion when the wisdom of Christ is in question.

Confuse the line between earnest seeking and mere inquiry, between conviction and opinion, and you may easily wander into doubt. "God," says the Roman Catechism, "demands an immutable faith." Devout inquiry, meanwhile, is its own reward. Information thus obtained is always guidance, is always comfort.

St. Paul thus exhorts us to Christian joy: "Let us feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 8). Truth, if it really possesses us, tends to make us like itself. As a mental state, truth is defined to be the equation of the perceptions with their object. Sincerity is fidelity to that equation. Square your mind to the reality of things as you know them; love to be well informed; read, talk, and write that way. The result is sincerity, honesty, simplicity, directness; in one word, fidelity to truth. And herein is the Christian's feast—the enjoyment of that self-respect which is the reward of sincerity. Such a Christian loves his knowledge because it is God's truth. He feels that a Christian should not have more knowledge of religious things than faith in them, which in its right form is love of knowledge for its own sake, and especially for the sake of the divine Giver of it. Opposed to this loyal and candid mind is that of the minimizer. He is afraid lest he shall become a partisan of holy wisdom, and he is always managing and manœuvring, lacking directness, especially lacking zest and fervor. He feasts upon the rules of discretion; the true man feasts on "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." A true man does not, indeed, disregard circumstances nor despise prudence in dealing with others. But the essential attitude of his mind towards the Faith is one of worship; and in communicating it to others he is joyous and proud of the privilege.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

I. Penance.

"And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

As at the beginning of Advent, so now at its end, Holy Church places us at the feet of St. John the Baptist to learn the lesson of penance. Again he exhorts us: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths." It is his ever-repeated call to "flee from the wrath to come" (Matt. iii. 7), because God's kingdom is at hand; His Only-begotten Son is here; a friendly reception by Him is conditioned on penance. But this is not simply to escape "the wrath to come," nor simply to pay a just debt to God which our tears of unfeigned grief alone can pay, but it is especially (and this alone fully describes the purpose of penance) that we may enter into close union of love with our Redeemer and our God, of which union He afterwards spoke: "Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom" (Luke xii. 32). That kingdom is now "at hand."

To this end the kingdom that this world is must be renounced, and we must so feel and so act that we shall live here as strangers and pilgrims, "and refrain" ourselves "from carnal desires which war against the soul" (1 Peter ii. 11). This is the meaning of the Baptist—penance and self-denial for the suppression of passion, and also for atonement to God for "the remission of" our "sins."

The first step is to accept the sufferings of our life in the spirit of atoning patience. When these are looked upon as marks of the divine favor, one has set one's mind in the right spiritual order. Often the best, sometimes the only, penance a Christian can do is to accept sickness with a mind resigned to the divine will—enforced penance, indeed, but exceedingly pleasing to God. St. Pachomius, a patriarch among the Fathers of the Desert, had a favorite disciple named Theodorus, who suffered from a continual headache. Some of the monks begged Pachomius to ask of God that he might be cured, but seeing his disciple's patience he refused, saying: "Though abstinence and prayer be of great merit, yet sickness suffered with patience is of much greater."

We admire the miraculous gifts of the Saints. But their patience in suffering was really their most extraordinary grace, and it was the chief source of all their holy power with men, the chief cause of their glory in heaven. Understand the place of suffering in God's plan of your salvation, and you will gain the most necessary knowledge of life. Self-denial, patience, humility, resignation, penance, O God, how can I gain these essential elements of heavenly love, but by bearing adversity and enduring pain for Thy sake. Hence the saying of St. Teresa: "God guides those He loves by the way of afflictions" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, xviii., 1). The universal novice master in the sanctification of souls, the one only leader of men to the eternal joys of heaven, is that benignant Providence Who thus describes His hard and sure way of love: "My son, reject not the correction of the Lord, and do not faint when thou art chastised by Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth" (Prov. iii. 11, 12).

Our pattern in this course of living is Jesus Christ. It was not by triumphing over enemies, but by enduring injuries that He became our Savior. Patient suffering was His choice of means and methods—enduring contradictions and injuries with all possible submissiveness. The Scriptures no less than all mankind associate the Crucifixion of Christ with bitter shame: "Having joy set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2). This must also be our plan, though it sometimes grinds our very souls with anguish. We read in the life of Venerable Joseph Cottolengo that "when he was ill-treated, a momentary sign of indignation betrayed the wound given to natural feeling; but in a few seconds peace was restored to his mind and serenity returned to his countenance." Thus are sufferings borne as penance by the Saints, opportunities for which are never lacking to them or to any of us. Dearly-bought victories may be constantly won with these cheap and homely weapons. David had but to stoop and gather pebbles from the brook, and loading his rustic weapon with one of them he "prevailed over the Philistine, with a sling and a stone" (1 Kings xvii. 50). Our Goliath is our sinful self, and we slay him by meekly enduring unjust treatment, or cold neglect, being mindful of our sins meantime. Suffering is a high prerogative to a man whose general confession forms part of his daily memories.

Sometimes God sends sufferings that make us pray more and with greater fervor, just as He did to our model Penitent, Who "being in an agony, prayed the longer" (Luke xxii. 43). This is the right combination. Advent is never better spent than when the sorrows of daily life are sweetened by the gladness of our prayers, such as hearing daily Mass, saying our rosary, and making some spiritual reading. Suffering, once it gets into possession, is sure to set a Catholic soul praying. Suffering without prayer is hardly to be imagined in a Christian man. But this must be genuine prayer; for it happens that prayer, or what seems prayer, is commonly enough taken to mean the whole of one's atonement, whereas it is too often only spiritual gluttony.

Consider an example of penance all the more moving because the atonement was for petty offences. If ever there was a guiltless soul it was St. Teresa. Innocent of any grave sin from her childhood, yet the ordinary frailties of our fallen nature, which haunt even such heroic souls, were to her matter of the deepest grief. She knew God's sovereign rights too well to make little of even the most indeliberate offense against His lightest wish. Having lived a long and saintly life, having rendered most distinguished services to religion, having completely quenched the very ashes of evil inclinations, yet when she was dying she instinctively clung to her habitual attitude of a penitent. Her last words were: "A contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. l. 19). Now this is different from one of her ecstasies which may not be imitated; when we imitate the contrite heart of a Saint we tread the solid earth of average spirituality.

Consider how high is the dignity of the Vicar of Christ; yet the first one, St. Peter, was our religion's foremost penitent—supreme pontiff and supreme penitent. This is certainly a comfort to us. Petty Christians as we may feel ourselves to be, we should aspire to be at least a little penitential, eager for at least the bitter little crumbs that fall from the children's table. After the Resurrection our Savior feasted His penitent Apostle with a threefold banquet of love, to show that bounteous love waits on saddened and starving sorrow: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? Now Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time: Lovest thou Me? And he said to Him: Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him: Feed My sheep" (John xxi. 17). Jesus will know our love as He knew Peter's, by beholding our sorrow of heart for our sins; for all our love must be, like his, penitential. As in Peter's case, so in mine; the more the penance, the better the love. All the energy of penance is turned first into fear, then into love of God; and all the honesty of love is shown by penance.

Some favored ones have died as martyrs for the Faith; but the vast multitude of the elect have gone to heaven without thus witnessing to the truth, except by the martyrdom of love. And yet we must one and all be martyrs of love, if we would reach heaven; and surely that martyrdom is penance for sin. Love must be a torment and a pain to us, because of the offense we have given to God; it must hurt our comfort in life—sometimes it must deprive us of all comfort except the deeply hidden consolation of paying a divine debt. "Love," says Blessed John of Avila, "makes us embrace hardships and overcome our repugnances by the burning charity God has kindled in us. In the nobler sort of souls this love of penitential atonement carries us beyond ourselves and makes us insensible to dishonor, as wine takes away the reason of a drunkard." In every well-disposed Christian the rule of reason, no less than of religion, is to use the comforts of life with self-distrust; not with freedom, but with fear. In the end one grows to dread neither death nor misfortune, but gives oneself up to God, come what may.

Nor should one think little of little trials; for God despises nothing that is capable of being called a suffering, and as such is made an offering to Him. Besides, we must bear in mind that little things, if they are many, show up well in their sum totals. "A life of perfection is a life of toil," was a saying of St. Philip Neri—what may be called *a life* can never be disregarded in its littlest details. Meantime our tendency to sin is a chronic evil, and demands a gradual cure, a persisting treatment, a daily, nay an hourly, application of a perpetual remedy:

and is not this the history of any perfect cure? Such a penance proves that " the joy of tears is more than that of smiles." And does it not—this gentle but ever-insistent atonement—fully meet the Baptist's requirement, that we "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance?" (Luke iii. 8.)

To impenitent souls the smiles of fortune are usually the most dreadful of the divine judgments. A smooth and easy condition of things, joined to vicious practices is too often a forecast of eternal misery. On the other hand, millions of souls are saved as a consequence of adversity; with which God sends the grace to receive trials by appreciating the divine purpose in them. What were His designs when He thrust these afflictions upon me? First, the universal purpose of His providence to wean men from transitory things; secondly, his purpose with me in particular, to make my life a desert of sadness, in which shall resound the voice of God's messenger: " Prepare the way of the Lord: make straight His paths."

It was the saying of a holy man: " God never costs too dear, however much we pay for Him." The interior possession of God is manifested in a conscience pacified by a sorrowful confession of sins, followed up by some real endeavor to atone for them. Once we are reconciled to our Maker, the whole substance of religion consists in two things: restraint of self, and love of God. Restraint that does not kindle love of Jesus our Savior is to be suspected—is hardly better than the worldling's self-indulgence—and divine love which does not mortify us by times is sentimentalism. But when one in all simplicity is glad for the sake of God's pity, and sad of heart for one's own sinfulness, then one has both the foundation and the summit of eternal hope. Of such a one the prophet speaks: " The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor; Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart" (Ps. ix. 39): here and now our heart's preparation for the joy of Christmas—the bitterness of our regret for our sins.

II. Christian Perfection.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill" (Matt. v. 6).

The first condition of holiness is an inward thirst for God. O God, to feel the want of Thee is to begin to possess Thee. Françoise de Bourdon, first disciple of Blessed Julie Billiart, when a little child was stung by a wasp. She screamed with the pain, and her governess bade her suffer in silence as a penance for her sins. She answered: "I have not yet committed any sins," but, drying her eyes, "I will stop crying for the love of Jesus." Sin calls for penance, but everything in life calls for love, whether it be the voice of nature or of grace, the thanksgiving for pardon or the joy of innocence.

The pagan philosophers prided themselves on having attained happiness because they knew the wisdom of God and loved His goodness, at least some of them had advanced thus far. And indeed they surpassed their fellows in happiness. But what of the Christian? He knows God by the supernatural knowledge of faith revealed to us by Christ and His Church, and he loves Him with a supernatural, a divine love. The difference between natural and Christian love is the difference between heaven and earth; man may make the one; only the living God can bestow the other. When the love of earth and the love of heaven are both raised and included in this supernatural love, then is the love of the soul enthroned with the divine. Thus the first words spoken by St. Francis de Sales in his infancy were: "God and my mother love me well." And his words in his letter to a friend some days before his death were: "The farther I advance toward holy eternity, toward which we both aspire, and on account of which only we must love each other, the more lovable do I find it" (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 463).

In the Christian active life this joyous devotedness to God is the blood-making element. "My meat," said the divine Lover, "is to do the will of Him that sent

Me" (John iv. 34). Perfection is to be so earnestly bent on God's work that one's tendency to please God is an ever-recurring appetite. As a hungry man desires food and eats it with a relish, so does an earnest Christian love and enjoy working for God; and in due time he acquires a very gluttony of zeal. "Perfection," says St. Teresa, "does not consist in consolations, but in striving for a greater love." And this is an abridgement of the whole scheme of sanctity.

How shall I love God? As the Spirit loves the Father and the Son, for it is with His voice that I cry out to God, "Abba! Father!" And it is the same Spirit that giveth testimony to my spirit that I am joined to Christ as His brother, and am become His joint heir of the Kingdom of His Father (Rom. viii. 15-17). Measure the Holy Ghost's love for the Father and the Son, and you will learn how to love God as He deserves.

Father! With what tenderness did Jesus speak that word, especially in the Garden: "O, My Father! not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42). With what majesty of love does the heavenly Father say of Jesus: "Thou art My Beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased" (Mark i. 11, and Luke ix. 35). It is in the depths of the Holy Trinity that we learn to love God, and our preceptor there is the divine Spirit, even for our most familiar devotions; for, says St. Paul, "No man can say the Lord Jesus but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3). How this inspires the active life of a Christian is a wonderful revelation of the divine adaptability of love. For God would not only have us show our love by outpourings of reverence, awe, adoration, and praise; He craves our alms and our visits and our tender compassion for Himself, receiving all these through His brethren, the poor and the afflicted: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. xxv. 40).

By every one of the multitudinous ways of love, God and our soul are united. But my soul is inexpressibly vile and God is infinitely pure—how can these two be made one? Because God's longing for our love is served by an infinite power, and hence that power, given to us, enables us to do that of which we ourselves would be absolutely incapable. The power of a devout Christian to throttle his lower nature and to live virtuously is the power of God, and it is communicated to Him in unbroken continuity in Holy Communion, of which sacrament of love our Redeemer said: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi. 58). For the long work and the hard work of life, one needs the only paramount and permanent force—love, according to the Psalmist: "I have run the way of Thy commandments when Thou didst enlarge my heart" (Ps. cxviii. 32). Fear is good if it urges us to run away from the gate of hell; but to keep on running when hell is left far behind, to run right on to heaven, requires love, full-grown fondness for God. As with fear, so with all other virtues, love must be their principle of life. Take our Lord's illustration of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-13), and notice that the foolish ones did not forget to take their lamps. "But the five foolish virgins, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them." The lamps are faith and hope, but the oil is the love of God. When the Bridegroom shut the door, their lamps could not let them in had they been of gold and encrusted with diamonds. Our Bridegroom must have lamps filled with oil, lamps of faith and hope brightly burning with love. God must have more than the faith and name of Catholicity; more than the fearful shrinking of penitents. He must have lovers, staunch and true; lovers for His eternal marriage feast.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

I. God's Love For Us.

"Dearly beloved, the goodness and kindress of God our Savior hath appeared."—*From the Epistle of the Second Mass of this Feast.*

My brethren, we wish you a Merry Christmas. May the goodness and kindness of God, our Infant Savior, fill your souls, and the souls of all who are dear to you, with new-born love and joy this day.

And who among us has the best joy of Christmas? Surely those who best love the Babe of Bethlehem. Foremost among these is His Mother the Blessed Virgin, and after her dear St. Joseph, who is the divine Father's representative at this happy birth. But all of us have, of course, a share of this love and joy, for according to St. John "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God" (1 John iv. 7). The joy of the Child is ours, for He is glad to be among us, His brothers and sisters, and we are overjoyed to have Him with us. It is related of St. Francis de Sales that his first words as an infant were these: "God and my mother love me well." Such were the first thoughts of Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem as He opened his eyes on His Mother and St. Joseph.

This is our Christmas joy—to be loved by Jesus the Son of God and of Mary, and our dearest Brother, and to love Him in return. Divine love is plentiful today. For if our Infant Lord has it by nature, being the "Only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father" (John i. 18), we have it in another way, having received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry "Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). Thus it is by the touch and impulse of the Holy Ghost, Whose overshadowing caused the Only-begotten to become Mary's Son, that our inmost soul loves Him this day as our Brother, while it adores Him as our God. And this adoption is not any legal formality of law, even divine law, but that marvelous "charity that the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1).

How precious should be to you, my brethren, those emotions of love of God and of your neighbor which well up in your hearts this happy day, especially if you have been to Confession and Communion—those affectionate appreciations of the truths of holy Faith, your immovable purpose of loyalty to your Infant King—because these sentiments are one and the same with His own love for His Father and His tender affection for you. For it is nothing less than with Jesus' own power of loving that His heavenly Father "hath graced us in His Son" (Eph. i. 6). Do you fully realize that your sense of dignity as members of Christ's Church, your feeling of consolation in the forgiveness of your sins, your thrill of joy at the honor conferred on you in Communion, nay, even your sense of shame for things you have done that are unworthy of a Christian—do you fully realize that all such emotions are proofs that "the Spirit Himself giveth testimony that we are the sons of God?" (Rom. viii. 16.)

This seems like high doctrine for simple people like ourselves. But it was not too high for peasants like those shepherds, who were taught by angels, and went in all haste to the birthplace of God's Son, "And seeing they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this Child" (Luke ii. 17). In the same way you best understand God's Christmas gift of goodness and kindness after you have tasted it in Holy Communion. We do not make bold to aspire to Mary's understanding of the Incarnation. But what Mary and Joseph did in their loving care of the divine Infant, you and I can do for His brothers and sisters with whom we live —we can love them for His sake, and we can make them happy. I can win His love by giving a cup of cold water in His name (Matt. x. 42). I can do so by getting the dinner nicely ready, and by washing the dishes afterwards, as Mary did for Him many a time. I can make others happy by loving them for His sake, and thereby I can make Him happy. Yea, as He feels the first pains of His sad lot on earth and weeps, I can dry His tears. I can visit a sick neighbor; I can console one in affliction for His sake. I can say my morning and night prayers to Him; I can hurry off to Mass just as fast as the shepherds went over to Bethlehem; I can solace His heart by humbly confessing my sins; and I can overwhelm Him with my love in Holy Communion. All this I can do, and it is all a most brotherly way of acting towards Him. I can make common cause with Him in all things; and I can make Him one with me in all the affairs of my life because I love Him as my Brother, and my Savior, and my God. And that I shall do all this is the yearning of that divine Heart, as we are taught by His Apostle: "Let all your actions be done in charity" (1 Cor. xvi. 14).

The lessons taught at the crib of Bethlehem are many, all of them marvelously well taught; but love is best taught—love for God and for man. And God's love to us is the supreme lesson to-day. The goodness and loving-kindness of God is now superior to all His other teachings and gifts. Love of us is the inspiration of His Son's example of self-denial in choosing to be born into our human existence. So does His love move Him to give us an example of patience and obedience and humility, simply infantile in trustfulness and affectionateness. And consider this view of the love of the Father: is He not generous to will us to have God His Son whenever we like—God as our Babe, and Boy, and Man, and King, ours now and forever more? Sum it all up: the love of Jesus in His birth at Bethlehem teaches us how gladly to be poor; He herein explains the wisdom of patience; He enforces the holiness of obedience and of humility; all by the majesty of the "exceeding charity wherewith He loved us" (Eph. ii. 4) in becoming man. Even in the littlest Christmas virtues He plays a part: He inspires and He rewards them. In each and every act or feeling, this day shows the meaning of our Lord's subsequent teaching, that

"God so loved the world as to give His Only-begotten Son" (John iii. 16).

Especially does His Christmas love draw us to repentance for our sins, by which He wins for Himself our most precious Christmas gift. And shall we not bestow this gift on Him? Who can withstand such an appeal?—God coming to him in "the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3), bearing his shame, atoning for his wickedness? Here divine love, seeking to pardon me for my wickedness, is at its best and greatest. Shall the love of Jesus offering me pardon, if I shall but repent, be in vain—offering me reconciliation with the tender accents and the sweet caresses of the Babe of Bethlehem? The dark shadows of the cave are pierced by the beams of love's brightness shining around our divine Infant, and I behold Him with His little arms stretched out lovingly, as He is held forth towards me by His blessed Mother. And not heaven itself can offer Him a richer Christmas gift than the joy of the embrace that awaits Him if I will but repent—nay, no joy in heaven could retain that divine child from this joy of giving me a joyful Christmas by restoring me my forfeited innocence. Can I refuse Him that joy? Can I delay it a single moment?

Soon the Child and His Mother will be led to the temple to be offered to His eternal Father, and the little turtle doves that Mary and Joseph shall give for His ransom shall be tokens of our souls, won and offered to heaven by His Incarnation. Then it shall be said to Joseph: "Arise, and take the Child, and His Mother, and fly into Egypt" (Matt. ii. 13). And again in due time he shall lead them to Nazareth in Galilee, and at last Jesus shall preach His Gospel and then die for us. But wherever He goes and whatever He does, Jesus is our Brother—Jesus of Nazareth.

During the persecution of the Emperor Decius, there was a gardener living in a town of Asia Minor, a fervent Christian, whose name was Conon. When cited before the pagan judge and asked his name and state of life and residence, he said: "I belong to Nazareth in Galilee; I am a brother of Jesus Christ, Whom I have served from my infancy, and Whom I know to be God and Lord over all things." And he was martyred for that profession of divine kinship, "I am a brother of Jesus Christ." The same blood relationship belongs to every one of us. That Child of Bethlehem of Juda, that Man of Nazareth in Galilee, that King crowned and enthroned on Calvary, is our Brother. He is this day born to us. Let us celebrate His birth with fullness of joy and of love.

II. Fear and Love.

"And the angel said to them: Fear not" (Luke ii. 10).

Religious fear is to be sought with deep anxiety, my brethren, and it is to be cherished with equal solicitude, for what we fear is well-deserved punishment for our sins. But the fear of the shepherds on the first Christmas morning was a better kind; it was awe and reverence at the "brightness of God" that "shone round about them." Was it not a blessed sentiment? Why, then, should the angel chide them and bid them cease to fear? Because a higher virtue than the highest fear now claimed them, for to them at that moment was born a Savior in the nearby city of David. When a child is born the whole house is beside itself with joy and with love; and fear has vanished away. Now the whole world must not dismiss fear—but put it aside and place it backward, whilst love, the holier virtue, shall rule supreme.

We have said that fear of God is not to be dismissed, but rather to be postponed to the inevitable moment of weakness, when the brute that is in us shall need whip and spur to make him behave himself decently and submissively: a moment, we repeat, sure to come. If love is superior to fear, yet love needs fear, for it is anxious, yea, over-anxious, lest it lose its beloved. "Beware lest you let God go," says Blessed John of Avila, "for it requires great care to keep Him. You must love Him dearly, or you will either forget Him or you will grow weary of Him. Do not rest till you and He feel sure of each other. Until the soul feels thus, it lives in fear and sadness, under the weight of the law. But when once it realizes it in God, there is little that can trouble it." The love of God should be the most vehement force in one's whole life, and as tender as it is vehement.

The soul asks the Master: "Lord, tell me why Thou dost love God?" And the Master answers: "Because He is My Father and He is God." And the disciple insists: "Master, tell me now how and in what manner Thou dost love God." But the answer is: "That, my son, is not easy to tell or know. Only this I say, I love Him as only God can love Him." Then the disciple: "Master, in all Thou sayest I would be one with Thee. Enable me, I pray Thee, to love God for Thy own reasons, and also to love Him in the same manner that Thou lovest Him, O Thou, my love and life all divine; for 'God is love, and He that abideth in love abideth in God and God in him'" (1 John iv. 16).

Meanwhile, if one would advance God's cause either in his own heart or among men, he must know God by love, especially by love of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, and of Jesus Crucified. How can a work be God's if the workman be not Godlike? except, indeed, one is a mere tool in God's hands. Our Savior in one of His parables (Matt. xxi. 37) makes an essential difference between a message sent by God's servant and one sent by God's Son. Of God's chosen ones it is said that their joy is dependent on their giving joy to others, and joy of only one kind, the highest possible, namely, union with infinite joy. To be united with that joy is a necessary condition for imparting it to another, except again simply as an instrumentality. "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (John xv. 5) says our Lord. This is especially true of those whose vocation is to rule or to instruct. Do you seek for the essential force of soul acting on soul? It is that of one "who speaks as of the words of God" (1 Peter iv. 11). Do you seek for the creative force of persuasion? Listen to the greatest of missionaries: "I judged not myself to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). Is it the divine corrective influence that you long for? Our Savior tells you of an instance of it; it is the case of Magdalen: "I say to thee many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (Luke vii. 47). The corrective, the pardoning, the essential, the beatific force is found in loving God as He is manifested to us at Bethlehem and on Calvary. Herein is the intensity of religion, its perfection, its energy and its rest, its vigor and its patience. It has pleased God to make His triumph in this world depend not on His infinite might, but rather upon the religious tenderness of His servitors, beginning with His divine Son. The whole conflict ends with the victory of love over hate, love over riches, love over self-conceit, love over despondency.

St. Teresa, writing of her visions of eternal punishment, says: "I have listened to people speaking of these things, and at other times I have myself meditated on the various torments of hell, though not often, because my soul made no progress by the way of fear" (*Life,* ch. xxxiii., 6). Yet she bears further witness that by these visions her soul made great progress by way of compassion for sinners, as we read in this same chapter of her pity for the heretics of her day, a sentiment which poured all the waters of fear away from herself and into the channel of zeal for souls. Not all of us, indeed not many of us, are led as she was—that is to say, hardly at all by fear. Nevertheless, for every single one fear is love's useful minister, generally the most useful of all. What is the Christian's life? Is it not the life of Christ exhibited by sincere imitation? As in St. Paul: "I live, now not I but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). Well, then, consider the fear that fell upon Christ ("He began to fear and to be heavy," Mark xiv. 33), as the preparation of His soul for the manifestation of supreme love in the Crucifixion. Fear for its own sake falls short of availability for intimately dealing with God. Yet every grade of it, even mercenary or quite selfish fear, has a place, and is sometimes indispensable. Beginnings are always precious, even remote beginnings. But love is the end, nor is it ever far to seek. St. Catherine of Genoa received this revelation from God: "In reading the Scriptures take always for thy support this word, love, wheresoever thou mayest find it. With this thou shalt go on thy way direct, pure, light, watchful, quick, safe from error, even if other guide be lacking or help from any creature."

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS.

I. Joy in Faith.

"Now there remaineth a rest for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9).

Many Christmas greetings have been exchanged among us, my brethren, some tearful, in the presence of heavy sorrow; some despondent at the gloomy outlook before us; most were joyous, absorbed in the glories of Bethlehem. Of the sad ones, that offered by a Catholic to a non-Catholic whom he would convert to Christ's true religion and cannot, is perhaps the saddest. He longs to share the Christmas joy of his Catholic Faith with one whom he loves. Let us consider the happiness of that Faith, the restful joy of "the people of God" in their religious convictions, especially in the case of converts.

What a matter for thanksgiving it is to have a mind so enlightened as to understand God's miracles of mercy in the life, death, and glory of His Son, and to believe in them without a single misgiving: "Giving thanks to God the Father, Who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12). On the other hand, Cardinal Newman speaks of "the dismay and disgust which I felt in consequence of the first dreadful misgiving" that Anglicanism was not any part of God's true Church. But after he had become a Catholic, indeed many years afterwards, he speaks of the peace and joy in the Holy Ghost that had been continuously granted him in the true Faith: "I have had perfect peace and contentment. I never have had one doubt......It was like coming into port after a rough sea; and my happiness on that score remains to this day without interruption" (*Apologia,* Part VII.).

So says every convert. It is not so much that he has gained peace and possesses it, but rather that peace has gained him and taken possession of him, peace surpassing all understanding and overflowing all measure of joy.

The Catholic Christian Church of Jesus Christ! It is mine at last. And what was to me a superstitious dream has changed into a heavenly revelation of truth. And the zealous Catholic who makes converts, he it is who bestows that joy on his neophyte. It is at his command that the convert beholds the blessed vision of eternal peace, saying with St. Peter: "Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable" (1 Peter i. 8).

"Now there remaineth a rest for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). Faith is that rest, the first and last, the temporal and eternal rest of God's friends. It is enjoyed in varying degrees, according to one's spirit of inquiry and of love. But especially, we insist, is faith a harbor of peace to a convert, for he has battled his way into it through the stress and storm of opposition, doubt, misgiving. "This is my rest, here shall I dwell because I have chosen it" (Ps. cxxxi. 14). My restful joy (he exclaims) is in the finding of the truth of God, taught me by His appointed teachers. My convictions are rooted in God's truthfulness. His Church is infallible in teaching, and I am certain in believing. God now says to me: "The mountains shall be moved and the hills shall tremble; but My mercy shall not depart from thee, and the covenant of My peace shall not be moved" (Isaias liv. 10). God's Church is my rest, and her sacraments are God's welcome to me. As God is all good and all wise, so am I a Catholic. O what a boon, my brethren, to know that if one would possess God he has but this simple beginning to make: To believe whatsoever

His Church teaches, and to believe it on His truthfulness, "Who can neither deceive nor be deceived."

An old saying runs thus: A work well begun is half done. The life work of every Christian is entire union with God in faith and love: faith begins and love completes this union. In the career of Christian perfection one progresses only by beginning constantly. "Over and over again" is the motto of all spiritual progress. And herein it is that the plummet of faith sounds the depth of love in revealing new reasons for beginning to love God. Ever ancient and ever new is St. Augustine's praise of God's beauty. And renewal of heart is only an ever-freshened loyalty to God, which in turn is dependent on the recurrent influences of the grace of faith.

The topmost branch of the tree of Catholic life bears its fruit only if the lowest root is sunk deep in the heart of God. And the Council of Trent affirms that that is the grace of faith: "Faith is the root of all justification."

Imagine, if you can, a fervent Christian discounting by flippant words the intensity of belief in an article of faith. Catholicity is sound when the root of faith is living and integral. One may boast of practising virtue, but if the virtue of faith wavers, every other virtue is open to suspicion. A tainted root generates defective fruit. One may do wonderful things for God and man, but if he will not believe God's doctrine delivered through His Church, he lacks a necessary element of every virtue, and we have reason to distrust him. But if one be a convicted criminal, and if he but have a sincere faith, we are right in trusting that God will add other graces, and finally save him. God grant us His own depth of joy in our faith: "Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to God" (Eph. v. 18, 19).

If intimate acquaintance is needed for personal knowledge, then Christ offers it to us. By Holy Communion He dwells in us and we in Him. By the grace of faith His gospel maxims are written on the very tablets of our hearts. Especially is He daily crucified among us in holy Mass. And in all these ways He has been with us for many years, meanwhile keeping in our most secret souls a monitor to help us accept His loving friendship, assimilate His divinity, be guided by His holy will—a monitor who is God the Holy Ghost. Meanwhile which of us dare say that his act of faith is a truthful profession of a veritable knowledge of Christ?

"When God gives us faith, He enters into our soul and speaks to our spirit, not by manner of discourse, but by way of inspiration, proposing unto the understanding that which ought to be believed, but doing it in so sweet a manner that the will receives therefrom a great complacency" (*Love of God,* Book II., ch. xiv.). St. Francis de Sales thus teaches us that the gift of faith is accompanied by an inspiration of sweetness. This is needful; for who believes anything against his will? "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still," is one of the truest of adages. In matters against which the heart violently rebels, the heart must be converted even after the intellect is convinced. With the grace of faith, then, comes the power that warms and moves the will and the affections. Love for truth may be simply a human sentiment. Faith is a divine virtue enabling us to see what our human powers cannot see, and to accept what otherwise the heart could not accept. When united with love it is capable of readily blazing up into a divine passion, making heroes, making martyrs.

Therefore, my belief and my affections, my profession of the truth, and my feelings, my religious bearing and my innermost motives, all must equally be inspired and joyously elevated. This may come slowly to me, but it is the true state of a faithful Christian, and is sure to come at last. He must sooner or later be inspired as well as instructed, and it is in that mood that he joyously receives all Catholic truth, accepts readily and easily the dogmas of councils and of pontiffs, as well as the usual and ordinary teaching of the Church as currently accepted among all the faithful.

But it may be asked: What has sentiment to do with knowledge? No one who has had experience in convert-making will ever ask that question. Conviction, persuasion, especially the final impulse of conversion, are as much the result of courage and disinterestedness as of argumentation. We knew a priest who spent four weeks of almost daily argumentation with a bright and earnest young Protestant seminarian, obtaining in due time several promises of joining the Church—always afterwards postponed for further argumentation. At last the priest refused to go on till the young man had spent three days in spiritual retreat without a word of doctrinal discussion. Before the three days were done he eagerly arranged for his reception into the Church.

Not only must error and doubt be banished, but self-will and worldliness must be bidden farewell, and also timidity and human respect, before one can say farewell to doctrinal delusion. Weak nature not only questions the truth of Catholic dogmas, but about many a one of them it exclaims: "This is a hard saying" (John vi. 61). The truths of religion are inseparably associated with chastity and humility, and many another difficult virtue. It often takes heroic virtue to change from the vague rule of a Protestant conscience to the distinct and peremptory command of a Catholic one.

II. Joy in Hope.

"But when the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

These words breathe into our souls the spirit of trust in God, a virtue known as hope. By that grace it is that we realize our sonship: "No longer servants but sons." Christmas is hope's gracious holyday, being the birthday of our Elder Brother (Rom. viii. 29). Surely the events of Bethlehem, wherein God hid His divine Majesty in the weakness of human infancy, and was so mindful of our necessities and our aspirations, show us plainly how greatly He desires that we should hope in Him.

The vices antagonistic to hope are (the greater ones) presumption, by which God's goodness is abused; and despair, by which God's justice is made to contravene His mercy, and falsify His promises. The little vices opposed to hope are excessive fear, forebodings, misgivings, and all spiritual glooms. The divine events that are the sources of hope are Christ's Birth and His Resurrection from the dead. The sacrament of hope is that of Penance. The cognate gift of the Holy Ghost is that of fortitude. The fruit of the Holy Ghost correlative to hope is that quality of a confiding character called benignity. The beatitude that presages its reward is: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill" (Matt. v. 6).

The better class of spirits are often annoyed and sometimes panic-stricken by forebodings about their future. It is a curious fact that to those plainly marked for heaven, salvation sometimes seems impossible. Let them remember that it is our Redeemer's pleasure to show love by doing for us what, without His help, we could never do. What is impossible for us, is possible with Him. "For," exclaims St. Hilary (as quoted in the divine office by Holy Church), "what was so possible to the power of God as the impossible thing of saving men by faith, or to regenerate them by water, or to conquer by the cross, or that we should be adopted sons of God by the Gospel, or that men should be made alive by death?"

The future is as much God's for miracles as was the past; and the plan of the salvation of one soul is as much a series of miracles as the salvation of all. We should leave in His hands our past for miracles of pardon, and our future for miracles of loving-kindness. We say this for our personal selves, for our poor sin-stricken lives. We say it to brighten our outlook in our work for other men's souls. Everything future of mine, O Lord, is in Thy hands, so strong, so tender. Give me to sum up the thoughts of this present moment (my single possession in fee simple) in one glorious word: Confidence!—this present moment which, as it looks forward and backward, beholds Thee in each direction: in the future supremely provident; divinely forgiving the past. Accordingly does the Holy Spirit exhort us: "Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord" (Ps. xxvi. 14).

The joy of the natural man flows from possession; that of the supernatural man is fixed upon promise, content with possessing trust in the power and the truthfulness and the love of Him Who promises. The whole "foolishness" of the Gospel and cross of Christ (1 Cor. i. 18) is to set aside the joy of having a lesser good for the sake of the joy of hoping for a greater one: "The just man liveth by hope" (Gal. iii. 11).

Some there are who, in the sunshine, chirp like a robin; and as darkness gathers mope like an owl. Not God but God's petting is their quest. But God is never so well trusted as when at last we distinguish Him and separate Him in our minds even from His tenderest spiritual caresses. A wayfarer by night says that he is lit by the moon, and in fact it is the borrowed light of the sun that guides him. A man says he has only the dim light of faith, a pale, flickering glimpse of eternal truth, and in fact this is a precious ray borrowed from the unclouded love of God by the friendly mediation of hope. Thus do the three divine virtues, faith, hope, and love, make a vista from earth to heaven.

My present joy is in a future good. My happiness in time is a forecast of the eternal years. The whole of existence is to have, yet not to have. To have now is not to have then. To have nothing now but the hope of then, is to have all that now is possible of rational joy, and, oh, it is an immense joy. How familiar eternity grows by the steadfast yearnings of the blessed virtue of hope. But anticipation of a future joy is fruitful in proportion to the absence of a present one, a condition of the validity of our hope. "For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth why doth he hope for?" (Rom. viii. 24.)

To everyone who came to him for counsel, St. Francis de Sales said: "Live joyfully and be generous." Brethren, if you put a religious meaning upon those

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words, you have a life motto. Such a soul does not speak joy, or even feel joy—it sings and thrills with joy, and the darkest night becomes lightsome. O God, grant me a hopeful spirit. I do not want the smooth way of the sluggard, but I do crave the elation of conscious courage. "The wicked man fleeth when no man pursueth; but the just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread" (Prov. xxviii. 1)—without dread if all mankind pursue him. But, alas, some who are not at all wicked, flee even from their own shadows like the veriest cravens: these are they who erect timidity into prudence and scrupulosity into repentance.

Lack of hope is listlessness of spirit. And yet if a good man will not rely on God Himself, to whom shall he turn? He turns, indeed, and he keeps turning about in one spot like a belated traveler in a dark wood. Gloomy about the past, pessimistic about the future, indifferent to all work or even recreation; if he has influence he spreads discouragement; if he has religious influence he preaches supineness, and calls it resignation to the Divine Will. How pitiful that qualities despised as cowardice in secular careers, should be prized as heavenly prudence in divine careers.

St. John of the Cross says that Christian hope is the cure of worldliness: "The freshness of a living hope in God inspires the soul with such energy and resolution, with such aspirations after the things of eternal life, that all this world seems to it—as, indeed, it is—in comparison with what it hopes for, dry, withered, dead, and worthless" (*Obscure Night,* Book II., ch. xxi.). The heart that really trusts God is proof against both self-trust and the infatuations of the world: "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord" (Ps. xxiv. 15) is the maxim of jubilant energy. St. Ignatius says that the first serious sign of God's work in him during his readings and musings while recovering from his wound, was that his thinking on the glory and achievements of worldly love and honor was followed by sadness, whereas joy followed his thinking of doing great things for God.

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NEW YEAR'S DAY.

I. Final Perseverance.

"The grace of God hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we shall live soberly and justly, and godly in this world."—*From this Day's Epistle.*

WITH all sincerity, beloved brethren, we wish you a Happy New Year. And that our good wishes, which surely are mutual, may be efficacious, let us consider the ways and means. The happiness we wish one another is that sweet inner joy which flows from the pardon of our sins; and let us add to this the hope of perseverance. Now having made a good Confession and Communion at Christmas, we must keep down our wicked tendencies: they will not stay down except by compulsion. St. Philip Neri says that the soul of man has evil tendencies upon it as many as the skins of an onion. And he adds that, unlike an onion, as soon as one skin of defect is pulled off another grows on: we must be always stripping off our growths of evil.

In that courageous spirit we look forward to the new year. Our hopes are founded on our fervor, which is a certain warmth of affection for divine things, and an equal detestation of wicked things. Going to the Sacraments regularly, saying our prayers faithfully, and despising bad company and bad reading, and doing it all resolutely: this is what fervor is. Most men slip back because they are pusillanimous. If your Christmas confession was that of a half-hearted penitent, you will have a bad year with a good beginning.

A man is not going to continue virtuous because he made a good Christmas duty for the sake of the feast, or in order to maintain an old custom in his family. In that case he has started on a long journey with a short supply of grace. Rooted virtue comes from steadfast fidelity. As the new year grows old one's virtuous principles must have become firmly grasped and established. There is as much difference between a new departure in clean living and a maturity of virtue as between green and ripe apples.

Perseverance lies in making this New Year's day as good a day as we would wish the next new year's eve to be. "Form often this good thought"—it is St. Francis de Sales who warns us—"that you are walking in this world between Paradise and hell, that your last step will place you in an eternal dwelling; and that to make the last well you must try to make all the others well" (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 182).

Nor need the depth of former wickedness alarm us about future fidelity, if present resoluteness but inspires our purpose. St. Augustine tells us that he was long hindered in his conversion by the thought that he had lived in unbridled enjoyment of sensual pleasures till beyond thirty years of age; vice, he feared, had grown into his nature too deep to be rooted out. But, he says, God gave him to see the contrary by the consideration of the many others, who, rising out of a similar misery, had become saints. Afterwards he wondered at his delusion. Nor need the shame of previous relapse make us downcast. The Apostles in the ardor of their faith promised to die with Christ; Peter said he had rather die than run away, "And in like manner also said they all" (Mark xiv. 31). In the actual temptation "His disciples leaving Him, all fled away" (Mark xiv. 50). Yet in due time they became the principal heroes of a Church of martyrs.

Be resolute and trust in God. In the early persecutions, history tells us there was a devout Christian of Smyrna named Pionius, and he was cut to the heart that some of his friends fell away, and under torture adored idols. At last he heard that his turn had come—the soldiers were at the door. He quickly took a rope which he had made ready, and he knotted it about his neck. Brought before the pagan judge, he was asked:

"Why have you put that rope around your neck?" He answered: "I have tied it about my neck to show you that my mind is determined to stand up firmly for Jesus Christ." And thus he was led to his martyrdom. What a good example this is; not that we need externally imitate the rope, but that "bound in spirit" (Acts xx. 22) we may interiorly fetter our waywardness, binding the cross of Christ upon our very souls in our good resolutions. And if this applies to such mortal conflicts as involve our friendship with God, it likewise concerns our struggle for Christian perfection.

"You must not expect to become a saint in four days," was the counsel of a holy man to a despondent disciple of his. One good encouragement is the very fact that God has now forgiven us our sins; for it is a harder thing to find than to keep a treasure, to save than to perfect a soul. Pardon is a greater miracle than perseverance. "For," says the Apostle, "if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10). Christ's death and life, these work together: the one to save from eternal death, the other to perfect unto eternal life. If you see a foundation laid with timbers lying at hand cut and squared, you look about you for a builder, and you expect a building. So it is with our faith, and our repentance, and our pardon, and our aspiration for better things; these are just the Lord's gathering of the divine materials for our perseverance, for we "are God's building" (1 Cor. iii. 9), and He has not gathered the elements of our spiritual construction and perfection in vain.

One may even mark his progress by a sense of failure, which is sometimes more apparent than real. We know of a holy man who said: "I have studied meekness in the school of Jesus Christ for many years, and my heart is far from being satisfied with the progress it has made;" and yet all of us knew him to be the meekest and gentlest of Christians. No sign of progress is better than a candid avowal of falling short of our standard. Thus our Savior taught His favorites: "When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants" (Luke xvii. 10).

Let us bear in mind that final perseverance is a separate grace to be identified with none other, be it the holiness even of a saint. It is equally certain that, except by a miraculous revelation, its possession cannot be known. But we are no less sure that it is a grace which is offered to all. Jesus gave His hand to the executioner to be nailed; and He gave it again to the Apostle Thomas to be kissed—the same hand and with the identical purpose of saving both the one and the other. Was the executioner saved by it? We know not. But we do know that the Apostle was. He held it, he kissed it, he placed his "finger in the mark of the nail," and he was confirmed in grace (John xx. 28). Jesus gives me His hand to be caressed and to be held forever—to lead me to Calvary, and thence to Paradise. Surely He is pleased with thoughts and hopes of perseverance, and even our perfection, at the beginning of the year.

We have heard it said that the greater number of the multi-millionaires failed in business at first, and that some of them became bankrupts more than once. Full of courage they started over again in business life, and it was for that reason, on account of that resoluteness, that they finally amassed their millions. So it is in the spiritual life. Starting over again is our salvation. Nay, falling off from our fervor (if we dared say it) is not seldom the schooling necessary for final success. It teaches us self-knowledge and self-distrust; it generates an immense gratitude to God for His patience with us. No one knows the royal fatherhood of God so well as one who has learned it by experiencing God's fatherly patience. "Who hath delivered and doth deliver us out of so great dangers; in Whom we trust that He will yet also deliver us" (2 Cor. i. 10). Herein the future is guaranteed no less by a perilous past than by a resolute present.

The law of God obliges me to be true to Him, not only till the end of this new year, but till the end of my life. I cannot receive absolution from sin without a promise of remaining permanently faithful to God; God requires this. He cannot do so without engaging something on His part—the grace of perseverance. He cannot ask a one-sided agreement. He cannot say: "You must promise to the end of your life, and I will promise till the end of 1913." Love is the matter of my promise as well as of His own; and how can He exact a promise of eternal love and give back a promise of love for but a while? Now all this sounds true, and it is true; but the difficulty is that whereas His promise is that of infallible love, my promise is that of inconstant love. Even so; what then? Let me all the more diligently make sure of its constant renewal. Let love be part of every act of religion on my part, eliciting on God's part the unvarying renewal of His benignant favors.

It is the misfortune of backsliding penitents that in returning to God they have (in their hearts that is to say) returned and been reconciled, as it were, to a human goodness rather than to a divine; they are reconciled to a law and not to a Person. Their process of repentance is rather an observance than an allegiance. Would that they knew the Apostle's meaning—does it not seem plain enough? "Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart as to the Lord, and not to men" (Col. iii. 23). Many a one begins good behavior with a holyday reception of the Sacraments in order to keep at peace with his sense of the human fitness of things; or to become more worthy of the name of Catholic, viewing the Church as just the whole company of good men and women rather than the embodiment of Christ's own goodness on earth; or even from the yet more defective motive of holding his footing in some society or his repute in his parish, keeping his place as a practical Catholic. And one and all of these presently fall by the way; they have done a good thing, even a divinely good thing by going to Confession and Communion. But they have done it not so much from the heart and as to God as from custom and human respect as to men. Cardinal Bona explains the collapse of their house of cards: "They eat one thing in Communion and hunger after another thing in their hearts. They eat the Bread of Angels and they hunger after the husks of swine. They are worse than the Jews, who ate the manna in the wilderness and sighed after the flesh-pots of Egypt." Wherefore even the promised land (so we may add) of a good life soon becomes tiresome to them, and is presently no happier than a land of exile.

II. The Value of Time.

"Whether things present or things to come; for all are yours; and you are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23).

Many and hearty good wishes to you, my brethren, for the year now opening. As—so at least we trust—you are in God's friendship this present day, so may our Lord hold you fast and firm and close to His heart during all the days to come, whether of this new year or of the succeeding years of your whole life. We should bless the new year as we bless our food as we sit down to dinner, asking the Giver of all good things to make it beneficial for our eternal years hereafter.

Did you notice in the Gospel of the Fourth Sunday of Advent the words: "In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar?" He was a gloomy tyrant, that same Cæsar; and now the benignant God, our Lord Jesus Christ, "the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, Who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. vi. 15, 16), is placed by Holy Church before us as sole owner of every year. "The year of the Lord" is the ascription of each succeeding year. To Him we dedicate this new one; to keep His commandments; to receive His sacraments; for His sake to love all our brethren; to live entirely for Him; and, if He so wills, for Him to die.

Our Infant Savior began His first year by shedding His blood in the holy rite of Circumcision. Immortal blood! and immortalizing the perishing hours of the world's life. That blood is the seal of pardon in our good confessions this year. It is the nourishing vigor of our souls in our communions. It is the pledge of all God's promises to us. This is the year of our Lord because the year of His blood, for as the Apostle bids us redeem "the time because the days are evil" (Eph. v. 16), so does the Lord ransom this fragment of it from the bondage of Satan and sin, that it may be to us a period of true penance, and an era of loving service. This is the year of our Lord, then, because granted to Him by His Father, its Creator; because it has been won by Himself in the shedding of His blood; because it is now offered to Him by us to whom His Father allotted it as part of our span of life.

When your little ones shall be baptized, their enrollment in God's family shall be dated the year of our Lord 1913. It shall so be written—perhaps—on your grave stone. It shall be marked as our Lord's year in your happy marriage. It shall be so inscribed in the holy register of your vows in a religious order or in the priesthood. All years are yours, for you are Christ's, Who is the immortal "King of ages" (1 Tim. i. 17).

Will you bear that in mind in your temptations as time goes on towards another new year? As the pressman feeds another blank leaf into his printing press, so does Jesus Christ now place before your soul's revolving hours fresh opportunities for doing good. And on each year's blank space He prints the first mark, His own stamp of ownership—the blood of His Circumcision is this year's first event; and it is His seal of ownership of its every moment. He Whom we love begins our year by His bloodshedding. The smell of human blood makes the tiger rage; the blood of Jesus Christ enrages the demons with worse than the tiger's fury against Him and against us. That blood fixes the love of Jesus in our souls in adamant. Bloodshedding means love courageous unto death—devotedness and loyalty unto the last breath. On Jesus' part this has been made good absolutely, literally. And what of our part? The Apostle said reproachfully to his converts: "You have not yet resisted unto blood" (Heb. xii. 4).

Time, my brethren sits in a high court of appeal. When at the moment of death we shall be at the beginning of the endless future, we shall be faced backward by the sovereign Judge, and we must then be able to say to the eternal years: I appeal from eternity to time. Yes, it is time that decides eternity. How good a man must he be who can outweigh the everlasting ages with the fleeting hours of this very year. Yet such is the whole meaning of the Church's lessons in this feast. My goodness shall be made eternal by the love for Christ which now actuates me—an irrevocable love for Him Whose love for me was true as His blood was precious. St. John thus speaks of his vision of Him: "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called faithful and true......and He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood; and His name is called the Word of God" (Apoc. xix. 11-13). This new year is that empurpled vesture of our Redeemer, and it is we who have clothed Him with it as token of our fidelity in 1913.

We often hear such high rating of the value of time as the following: Time is money—in the business world; time is death, or time is life—the language of the physician; time is love—the hopes of the lover. But what think you, my brethren, of St. Bernard's saying? "Time is worth what heaven is worth." Such is the estimate of time by the Saints of God and by God Himself. One minute's talk between the Crucified Jesus and the good thief was long enough to secure everlasting bliss. O let us dedicate to such uses every wakeful hour of this year, and make it count in work and word and thought all for Jesus and for heaven.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EPIPHANY.

I. The Faith of the Magi.

"When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him."—*From the Gospel of this Feast.*

To these Wise Men the sky was radiant with the glory of God. The majesty of the noonday sun, the wonders of the starry heavens, occasions of superstition and idolatry to so many of their countrymen, were to them a revelation of the infinite God. At length they saw a strange star in the sky, and as they gazed upon it they felt a new joy in their souls. Then an inner voice, strong and sweet, spoke to them, bidding them away: "To the righteous a light is risen up in darkness" (Ps. cxi. 4). They instantly obeyed.

O Wise Men, indeed! O bold and eager spirits! How strange are your adventures, the very romance of holy faith; the starry guide beckoning towards the land of Israel; the journeying in the night time and sleeping by day; Jerusalem at last, and the disappearance of the star; and then the anxious inquiring; the sluggish priests and the dreadful tyrant Herod; the star again; finally the sweet Mother and gentle Joseph, the new-born King, the infant God.

Herein are many Christian virtues revealed, my brethren, but especially a bold and independent faith, and, withal, humble and obedient; together with the candor and openness of men passionately devoted to the finding of the truth.

"We have seen His star and we are come." They beheld God's sign, and they acted at once. Faith is prompt to act. These are the minute-men of the Gospel. The flower fresh clipped and the flower clipped only yesterday, how essential the difference between prompt and laggard obedience to divine inspirations.

Instant in their start, the Magi were persistent to the last step of the long journey. Mile after mile they joyously journey on, joyously if laboriously. Just as myriads of other converts have followed the divine attractions of truth as God revealed them, one by one, in their faithful studies and inquiries. God guides the understanding by faith, as He does the feet by the eyes, step by step.

> "Keep Thou my feet: I do not ask to see.
> The distant scene; one step enough for me."

Until at last the distant promise becomes the present possession of Catholic faith, gained by patient fidelity to truth, whilst it was but partially known, dimly understood.

But what sense was there in following a star in search of a foreign king, leaving home and kindred, with nothing surer than that to go by? Many friends must have thus protested to the Magi. Doubtless other men of science saw the star, were puzzled by it, puzzled and nothing more. All these said that the Magi were fools. And now we know who were wise and who were fools. To the one class the star was just a newly shining luminary in the sky; to the others it was a token for a divine rendezvous. Thus faith considers things not in themselves only, but in what they mean as between the soul and God.

The shepherds had angels to instruct them, and the "brightness of God shone" on their path to Bethlehem (Luke ii. 9). No wonder that they promptly started across a few little hills to find the new-born King. The Wise Men had but a twinkling star in the vast darkness of the sky; no less promptly did they arise and start from the distant East upon a long journey through strange countries. How wise a man is he who knows the meaning of *hic et nunc* in spiritual things. Truth sometimes turns night into day with its dazzling certainty. Sometimes again it is a faint beam of light amid utter darkness. In every case, and at the first moment that I see it and recognize it, I must give it hearty faith and prompt obedience.

Arrived in Jerusalem, the Wise Men, having shown heroic obedience to God's miraculous signal, now offer entire submission to God's outwardly constituted authority, the Jewish priesthood. They show themselves willing to substitute God's ordinary for His miraculous guidance. They start for Bethlehem on the word of the priests even before the star reappeared to them, as they had started for Jerusalem on its first appearance in their own country. God rewarded them; for "Behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." The reward of ordinary obedience was miraculous guidance.

The disappearance of the star at Jerusalem is like loss of sensible sweetness in our devotional life. May I be ever as true to my sense of duty, and my devotional rule of life in aridity, as were the Wise Men obedient to reason and faith after the star was hid. It may have been that the Magi, like their fellow-countryman of old, Abraham the Chaldean, thought that they were never to return from Judea, and perhaps they forsook home and kindred, intending to become subjects of their new-found King. But the disclosures of Jerusalem, and Herod with his horrid court, taught them differently. And now God again interposes miraculously. "Having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod they went back another way into their country." God led them by a star; God guided them by the Hebrew Scriptures as interpreted by lawful authority; God now preserves their lives and brings them safe home by a revelation from heaven. And they obeyed with uniform alacrity in every case. They were courageous enough to go openly to Bethlehem, and yet not foolhardy enough to return homeward through Jerusalem.

Not every man of science would stoop to consult religious teachers for the meaning of any phenomenon of earth or sky or sea. But our Wise Men were humble men; neither in science nor religion were they above seeking advice. They would not go by God's star alone, but also sought the guidance of His duly constituted ministry.

To me, as to them, the criterion of the validity of personal views and opinions, even of inspirations, is the approval of lawful external authority. The man who is led even by apparent miracles, disregarding Christ's greatest miracle, His Church, is sadly misled.

Blessed the man who has the divine vigor of conscious personal guidance from on high, yet well safeguarded by heartfelt loyalty to God's external authority. He is one of God's wise men.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). How pure of heart must the Magi have been, to whom it was given to see God born in a stable—simply devoted to truth, entirely disinterested as to their own preconceptions. How beautiful to behold these souls, refined by a life of intellectual labor, adoring this child in His simple Mother's arms, and taking high lessons from Joseph, a village carpenter. They are not unwilling to enter that school after the unlettered shepherds are gone. There are some souls humble enough to take a back seat in the school of Christ. For them is reserved His highest diploma. What scene more touching than that of these masters of human wisdom learning divine wisdom from the silence of a little babe.

The humble soul is led across lots to wisdom's fountain head. Could Mary and her holy spouse have any secrets with such men as these? Could the divine Infant Himself? All men need to be taught, and to the latest hour of life each one can learn something divinely beautiful and true, if he is so humble as to allow himself to be taught. But no one is so ready to be taught as a right-minded man of education.

Lessons not a few are taught by the event commemorated to-day. One is the steadiness of mind needed by a Christian amid the skeptical tendencies of our times. The progressive mind fears that the Church is too slow, and that she will fall behind the advanced learning of the present; the conservative mind fears lest our scholars shall go ahead too fast; the simple Catholic mind loves the past without unduly mistrusting the present learning; and, like the Wise Men of the East, he employs all his knowledge for his own and the Church's present practical purposes, remembering that "the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth" (Eph. v. 9).

There are saintly souls content with their catechism and an elementary exposition of revelation. And what wonderful fruit of wisdom for their soul's life is in their holy musings; and how often do we find them powerful convert makers. Every truth of revelation, nay, every word of it, is to them a flowing fountain of joy and light. But, again, there is another and a more intellectual class; and they are like St. Philip Neri. When, being yet a layman, he had spent some years of a most prayerful life, his biographer (*Bacci,* vol. i., ch. 4) tells us that "he determined, in order the better to understand heavenly things, and to taste them more perfectly, to add the study of philosophy and theology to what he had already learned." Thus even a simple mind shall "acquire knowledge," whilst on the other hand "the ear of the wise seeketh instruction" (Prov. xviii. 15).

St. Jerome says that when he was a young man he studied Cicero with such passion that sometimes he forgot to eat and drink. But what happened when God drew him to the study of Holy Scripture? Forgetting to eat and drink and to be clothed and lodged became habitual and, as it were, systematic with him; it was his peculiar manner of life. Once it was an occasional passionate indulgence in the masterpieces of profane eloquence; and now the study of divine things is like a prolonged ecstasy. He imitated our Magi, who from diligent observers of the heavenly bodies became adorers and pilgrims of heavenly truth.

II. Faith and Doubt.

"When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem; saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him" (Matt. ii. 1, 2).

Whilst we praise God for the faith of these Wise Men, so fearless and so enlightened, let us endeavor to follow their example. A fearless faith indeed was theirs, for it defied the dangers of a long journey through barbarous nations. And it was a wise and prudent faith also, for we learn a little further on that when they discovered King Herod's treachery "they went back another way into their own country."

So does a good Christian act. He seems sometimes even to be afraid of losing his faith. He will not easily listen to or read an attack on it. He shows temper when it is assailed. How then is his faith a deep, permanent conviction? Because his fear is lest he shall be caught and deceived in an unguarded moment by some specious objection. The deeper his love of truth the greater his aversion for error, and he knows that error is sometimes exceedingly attractive at first glance. Truth fears its contradictory, not as likely to be true, but because, though false, it is often plausible. A faithful soul fears lest it fail to love the truth as well as it deserves, lest it may be fascinated by the glitter of error, or corrupted by its license.

The question is, however, seldom one of holding or losing Catholic belief. It is rather whether one shall have a militant faith or a belief that is politic and huckstering; a sensitive or vigilant faith or a sleepy one; an aggressive and courageous faith, or a timid even a cowardly one; an enlightened faith, or a stupid and racial faith. These are a few of many alternatives of the same sort. But with some of us there is another alternative, and it is a matter of practical interest to Catholic Americans, relating, as it does, to our non-Catholic friends: Shall our faith be kindly or bullying? With not a few, to be aggressively zealous means to be very unkindly.

We sometimes hear it said of a certain defect: That is a good fault—that is an amiable weakness. But the fault of browbeating, doubting or questioning Protestants in the interests of Catholicity, is not a good but a very bad fault—it is so in any one, but especially in one whose place or whose intelligence gives him the power of a teacher.

The same is true of our dealings with Catholics whose faith is weak. Take an illustration: What sound is so painful as the breathing of a dying man. But, oh, the awful silence when that gasping sound totally ceases. So, temptations against the faith are bad enough, but as long as a man struggles on, his faith is not dead—where there's life there's hope. And better still, what seems to be a state of despair about the tormenting difficulties of religious belief, is often only the trial that "worketh patience, and patience hope" (James i. 3).

No man knows so well how precious a boon is the grace of faith as one who has, seemingly, lingered long and half-willingly upon the brink of apostasy. How kindly such a one, after he has been saved, deals with those who are suffering from a similar visitation, how gentle his touch, how sympathetic his treatment. He has learned by dear experience the sadness of a state in which the very life of the soul has been in peril.

Questioning is not forbidden, even though the matter be God's highest revelation. Cardinal Newman says: "A thousand difficulties do not make one doubt." Our Mother Mary did not risk her loyalty when she questioned that mighty angel, saying: "How shall this be done?" (Luke i. 34.) For she did not say to heaven's messenger: "Except I understand it all clearly, or unless you explain the guarantee of my virginal seclusion, I will not believe." But yet she would know how it could be that her obedience to the call of this strange maternity should not cause her to forfeit her cherished virginity.

Was not this a reasonable matter of inquiry? The angel so thought, and he gave her questioning deep reverence and an immediate and perfect answer. Hence the praise of Mary by her cousin, St. Elizabeth: "And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord" (Luke i. 45).

But there is another kind of questioning, namely, that of Thomas the Apostle. When the other Apostles told him that they had seen the Lord risen from the dead and all glorious with immortal life, he refused to believe, and he said: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John xx. 25). Now this questioning was inspired by culpable doubt, whilst that of Mary was inspired by praiseworthy desire of necessary knowledge. Between these two lies my choice. Mary's spirit of inquiry is zest for more truth arising from love of what truth is already possessed. Thomas' spirit is vainglorious love of his own opinion, joined to an attitude of suspicion of anything he cannot quickly and clearly understand.

Hence the Catechism of the Council of Trent says: "Faith, therefore, excludes not only all doubt, but even the desire of subjecting its truths to demonstration" (First Art. of Creed). Faith is in the order of free and meritorious acts. But the belief in demonstrated or scientific truth is compulsory and devoid of merit. The truths of faith appeal indeed to reason, but essentially to right reason, to honest reason, to devout reason. The articles of faith are as absolutely true as God. And yet they come to our knowledge in such wise that to hold them fast the mind must be loyal to reason in a superior way, an influence enforced supernaturally. Therefore faith is never quite at home in any but a virtuous man's mind. The son of Sirach says: "He that keepeth justice, shall get the understanding thereof" (Ecclus. xxi. 12). The dogmas of religion are best understood only by those who make them the inspiration of religious conduct.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.

I. The Name of Jesus.

"Now after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb."—*The Gospel of the Feast.*

Blessed be the holy Name of Jesus! This day we do honor to that glorious title which gives the Redeemer of the world His place at the head of the enrollment of all of God's elect—aye, even before all heavenly spirits, for He is "so much better than the angels as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they" (Heb. i. 4). Glory be to God the Father this day, my brethren; our Father, indeed, patient and kind, loving us more than we love ourselves; and Who gave us His Only-begotten Son, and said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus [a savior], for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). How adorable is that Name, the one that our little children should first lisp, the last one we would wish to pronounce as our lips grow silent in death: "For there is no other Name under heaven given to men, whereby we may be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Blessed be Jesus Christ the Son of the living God. And blessed be the Holy Spirit of God, the divine treasurer of our Savior's heavenly wealth, upon all of Whose gifts is stamped the royal inscription of Jesus, for "no man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3). Blessed and honored be God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in that sacred Name and title by all creatures now and forever more. Amen.

In the life of Bishop Frederick Baraga, the saintly missionary to the Chippewa Indians, we read that during his many painful journeys through the bleak northern country, when he came to make his camp at night, he used first to take his staff and mark on the ground the sign of the cross, and trace the name of Jesus under it; and there he lit his camp fire, that its flames might thereby be sanctified, as all his own acts of burning zeal for souls were sanctified by the fire of that holy Name, for he remembered the words: "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire" (Deut. iv. 24).

Consider, my brethren, the circumstances surrounding the bestowal of the holy Name. The eternal Father's ambassador for that end was Saint Joseph, the divinely appointed foster-father of the infant Redeemer. We have already noticed the command that was laid upon him, and we need not mention his awe and his reverence in the act of obedience by which that Name was officially given, the symbol which eternally shall shine upon the souls of all the blessed, for "His Name shall be on their foreheads" (Apoc. xxii. 4) in heaven. The naming was at the very moment of the Circumcision, as this day's Gospel narrates; for such was the rule among the Jews. As if God would say to the father of every Hebrew child: When thou namest him cut his flesh and draw his blood, for in My religion the nobility of the soul is chronicled in blood. This was especially true of the Child Jesus, for His entire glory is in the bloody death of the cross. And another reason is that the sincerity of words is never so perfectly manifested as by bloodshedding. Therefore it was right that the first response Jesus should make to His Name should be the pouring out of His blood; just as the last official publication of His Name and title, being written by the Roman governor, was nailed with Jesus to His cross: "And they put over His head His cause written: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt. xxvii. 37). Thus did the divine Child give His blood at the Circumcision and receive His Name at the same moment; His blood was the earnest money of our full ransom paid down on Calvary, and His Name was His sign manual.

That sound which is sweetest in the whole world, the name Jesus, when its owner first acquired it, was not only sanctified by His blood, but was also mingled with His bitter sobs. Sharp cries of pain and the loud call of that

Name are forever joined together in the memory of Mary and Joseph, just as His later sobs and tears in the Garden of Olives and the groans of His expiring heart on the cross are mingled with the jubilations of all heaven triumphing in our salvation. Jesus! exclaimed Joseph as he cut the child's flesh. Jesus! echoed the invisible angels, and patriarchs, and sages of Jehovah's ancient Church. Jesus our Savior! exclaimed Mary and the devout company of friends and relatives, as they saw the blood of the Infant Savior flow, and as their hearts melted with pity for Him and with gratitude for His salvation; for to them and to us His pain is joy and hope and love, His Name is salvation. In earth and heaven, in our souls and in our holy books, in time and eternity, the Name of Jesus is henceforth to be proclaimed and written and adored. And its owner takes His place in the Holy Trinity, true God and true Man, under the Name of Jesus the Savior of mankind. Saints not a few have burnt it into their breast with red-hot iron, as if to rival by outward fire the burning zeal for its honor that inwardly consumed their thoughts and affections. And sinners by the million have found the speaking of that Name in shame and hope and love to be the talisman to unlock the fountains of their tears of contrition, to open their lips in humble confession.

Turn we now from these happy feelings of our honor and of our dignity to sad thoughts of regret: let us, if only for a brief interval, consider how this Name, so sweet to the angels, is profaned by men. God of old commanded: "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh the Name of the Lord his God in vain" (Exod. xx. 7). If this law was made in order to sanctify the Name of Jehovah, it was to become doubly applicable to the Name of His Only-begotten Son, Jesus. Yet consider, my brethren, that no Commandment is so commonly violated, whether by cursing as by false swearing, and even now and then by downright blasphemy.

And you must be aware of the prevalence of profane swearing, which is the misuse of God's name and that of

Jesus in ordinary conversation. Why, my brethren, it is a fearful evil. Multitudes of nominal Christians can hardly speak twenty words without calling down God's most holy Name, or even the sacred Name of Jesus. They do it to make a lie seem true; to make an insult more stinging; a calumny more foul; anger more violent; immodesty more alluring—for all these detestable ends is God's name made to do the devil's work. Take an illustration. Once we heard of a ruffian ridiculing the Catholic priesthood, parading around in the sacred vestments of holy Mass; and a Catholic man of fiery temper, coming across him, shot him dead. Brethren, it was the sin of murder, indeed, but the provocation was extreme. What must be the indignation of God's blessed angels as they listen to the profane language all too commonly used among us. "Their throat is an open grave" (Rom. iii. 13) exclaims St. Paul, speaking of such sinners—their words are a sickening stench rising up to heaven; their tongues are doomed to rot with fire. Brethren, I am not saying that every single case of cursing or of profane swearing is a mortal sin, for sometimes it is done too hastily for advertence. But all must agree that the habit is gravely sinful. Habitual swearing and profanity is vicious, is scandalous, is injurious to the divine honor, and is wholly inconsistent with God's friendship.

But let us return to more cheerful thoughts. We hear much, my brethren, of the profanity of our times, and we cannot deny that this vice is prevalent to a fearful degree; and it is insolent, aggressive, too often the dominating power in private conversation. But thanks be to God, the Name of Jesus has its adherents by the million. Though gentle they are none the less aggressive, and they are as fearless as becomes the champions of our Redeemer, Who goeth forth "conquering and to conquer" the souls of men (Apoc. vi. 2). Consider our Holy Name Societies, one group of devout organizations out of very many others. We select them for mention because they are made up of men exclusively, and because they now and then march through our towns under the

Savior's banners in vast numbers. These represent our religion very worthily, because they are the embattled hosts of kindly love, all proud of that Name which is "as oil poured out" (Cant. i. 2) upon the wounds of our stricken humanity. The Holy Name Societies are a brotherhood of divine and human love. They march through the streets an army of God's mercy set in array, a multitude of virtuous and God-fearing men, whose purity of tongue, and hand, and heart is well worthy of our acclaim, and whose emblem, the sacred Name of Jesus, is most appropriately chosen. This pageant of loyalty to Jesus appeals invincibly to the hearts of men. These processions are the pomp of a war whose only bloodshed is that of our Commander-in-Chief, Jesus the Son of Mary. Catholics find no temptation to vainglory in the immense numbers of their Holy Name men, but rather they are softened with a deeper affection for their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons, thus changing the ostentation of display into the splendor of religious brotherhood, our most stalwart humanity adoring in military order the Prince of Peace. And these same men have already won our admiration by their silent alignment under the divine banners at the communion railing.

To non-Catholics the Holy Name Societies are an overwhelming argument for the Church's claim to divine origin. Not for money or power, but for love is all this multitudinous marching. This gigantic force of organization and discipline is the splendor of religious brotherhood in Christ Jesus. It is the citizenship of Jesus' friends passing in review. It is a grand muster of the best specimens of American manhood and citizenship, consecrated to the aims of religion.

When the Holy Name is spoken, we bow our heads. It is a little act with a great meaning, for no word—not even that by which God created the very heavens—is so worthy of reverence as His Son's Name. "At the Name of Jesus," says the Apostle, "every knee shall bow, of them that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 10). "Hallowed be Thy Name" is the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, and it means all religion.

St. Peter of Alcantara was once seen in a snowstorm walking along bareheaded. A friend said to him: "Brother Peter, cover your head." He did so out of kindly deference, but he answered: "If I was in the presence of the king I should stand uncovered before him. And it happens that God has just been making me feel that I stand always before Him." The Name of Jesus when it is spoken, is His presence vibrating in my soul, and some outward token of recognition is due Him. Furthermore, when we make the sign of the cross, we should do it slowly and recollectedly, for the cross of Christ is His standard, and the names of the blessed Trinity are the designations of Jesus Himself as the Only-begotten, and of the sovereign majesty of the Father, and of the infinite charity of the Holy Ghost.

II. Zeal For Making Converts.

"Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house" (Matt. v. 15).

Brethren, these reproachful words of our divine Master apply to many a Catholic, who puts his holy Faith as far away from non-Catholics as he can; it is a candle in a dark lantern, its little gleam of light confined to his own single self. For not seldom even the members of his own family get little instruction or edification from him. Now you are all aware that to-day we open the annual non-Catholic Mission of this parish, and I exhort you one and all to hold up your light of Faith high and plain among your non-Catholic friends and acquaintances, and let it guide them to the lectures, the inquiry class, and the private interviews with the Fathers.

We need not ask those of our parishioners who are converts to busy themselves in securing our audiences, for converts, because of their non-Catholic friends and relatives, have the opportunity very ready to hand. Every convert in this parish—and we have very many of them—may be relied on to do his whole duty during the coming two weeks. They will imitate St. Andrew the Apostle, who, the moment our Savior calls him to his discipleship, goes "and findeth first his brother, Simon, and saith to him: We have found the Messias. And he brought him to Jesus" (John i. 41).

Nor do we need to urge those many Catholics born and bred whose missionary energy outstrips all others. Mark these fervent souls, how they will spread the glad tidings of our mission. They will hand around the cards of invitation which we have distributed among you. They will put aside human respect and arouse their sense of brotherly love. And they will personally invite their non-Catholic neighbors and friends to accompany them to the lectures. O, my brethren, it seems a little thing to ask a friend to spend a short while at church hearing about the ancient Faith of Christendom, but it is in thousands and tens of thousands of cases the opening of the gates of Paradise to his immortal soul.

St. John of the Cross says: "The love of God in a pure and simple soul, detached from every earthly desire, goes forth into action frequently (*Maxim* 359). Now, the love of God overflows the "pure and simple soul" of a good Catholic, after Holy Communion, for instance; and he then says to himself: What am I doing to impart such privileges to other souls?—what am I doing for Jesus Christ? My brethren, to many of you such language may mean little more than pious talk. But to many others—and are not they the better sort of Christians?—such questions are a torment of conscience. Forth they go to bring Protestants to the Mission services, steadily praying for them meanwhile with ardent fervor. Upon such dear friends of the Good Shepherd do we rely for our audiences of non-Catholics. Good fellowship, neighborly feeling, or just a bowing acquaintance—such light things as these are for the nimble feet of zeal a strong enough bridge to pass over the chasm of indifference or prejudice.

My brethren, within the past few weeks we have wished you with pastoral affection all of God's graces for Christmas and for the New Year. Among these heavenly favors, what one can compare with the privilege of saving an immortal soul?—of bringing home to the heart of God one of His wandering children? It is not a stranger that you introduce to Jesus Christ when you make a convert, nor a friend that has been estranged—no, it is an own brother of His, a son of the heavenly Father, separated from God's truth and love without fault of his own, one for whom a vacant place has always been kept in the divine household of the Church.

And how easy it is to do it. This is plain from the fact that it is so often done. Let everyone of you, therefore, bring up this Mission as a matter of conversation among your non-Catholic friends; tell them that not a word of abuse shall be heard from this pulpit, but just plain reasons why we are Catholics, that the deepest problems of life shall be fully treated of; that the question box is open for their every inquiry. Finally, we ask—and this is what we emphatically insist upon—that every man, woman, and child in this parish shall pray daily for the success of the Mission.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

I. Humility.

"Be not wise in your own conceits."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

A CONCEITED man, my brethren, is an object of contempt, and St. Paul in the words of our text sarcastically calls him "wise:" he has the fantastical wisdom of the fool. Herein, and in many another place, the Apostle teaches humility, the commonest definition of which is the acceptance of the truth about one's self-recognition of the actual state of facts. To acquire humility look for the truth. It is research of a rudimentary kind, the data being right at home—the mere primer of the science of holy living. Hence the easiest of virtues to acquire? Not so fast. The easiest to understand? Yes. Practically to take hold of and act upon? Not so! Not so! It is investigation by a man blindfolded. It is searching for what one does not want to find.

Again, our definition is one-legged. Here is the whole. Humility is truth about myself, meaning my defective self; it is furthermore the love of that knowledge of myself for the reason that I love to be true; yet again, because the Holy Ghost will direct me only when I know what I am; still further: my motive must be desire to imitate Jesus Christ in the lowliness He accepted for my sake. My humility is in union with that of the Son of God; it is on account of His lowliness. This is humility, and Christian humility.

When this grace comes to the heart, it is in the form of painful self-revelation. And then a voice is heard, as it were the voice of God, saying: Here are the proofs against you, proofs of what you are, and what you were, and what you are capable of becoming. They are overwhelmingly against you, conclusive. Now I require you to open court upon yourself, to proceed to arraign and condemn yourself, and to sentence yourself to take your place meekly with My Son in His humiliations. A strange court, a singular Judge, a marvelous penalty. Our Apostle elsewhere beseeches us "by the mercy of God" to offer ourselves "a living sacrifice holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1). A reasonable service is one founded on knowledge, by which we, taking God's place, say to our soul and body: What are you, anyway, that you offer yourself to God? And the reasonable answer is: Of myself, O God, I am nothing, but joined with Thy divine Son I am everything—everything to Thee, everything to myself. By my own free choice I am sharer in His humble life and death, and co-heir of all His riches (Rom. viii. 17). By my loving participation in His humiliations, I am to Thee, O heavenly Father, and to Thy Holy Spirit, all that is meant by being Thy Son's brother.

The patent difficulty is our inability at first to realize our own insufficiency. The light of human reason from its very dawn shines in an atmosphere of self-conceit. Therefore must this self-knowledge be gained, especially in earlier days, by implicit trust in divine guidance. One must be a schoolboy before he is a professor—and this is true in self-research above all other departments of knowledge, *Deo Gratias* that the school is open, that the school bell faithfully ringing is conscience, and that the Son of God is the Master, Who stands at the door ready to enroll and instruct His scholars, saying: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). In religion (as in science) it is a commonplace that beginners must take things for granted: school children go by the mere authority of their teacher. The truths first taught are unproved, but are absolutely believed, because taught at school and by the schoolteacher—the institution and its master are rightly deemed infallible. Of these truths unproved but well believed in God's school, the most practical is that we are not half so good as we seem to be, especially to ourselves. Christ the head Master and all of His assistants tell us that, and they bid us lay it to heart. He and they cannot all be wrong.

But fortunately we soon verify this by actual experience. Never did a man look back even upon a short twelve month of good living, but that he said: "I have had an exaggerated notion of my virtue; I have had but a superficial knowledge of my faults." Or the converse: "I know my faults better now; I have until now almost totally ignored the awful debt I owe to God and man; I have constantly been forgetful that all that I am and have is from God; I have lost virtue by claiming virtue." Is not all this truth's utterance? What! shall any man deny that he owes all to God? Against him stands God's Apostle, saying: "What hast thou, that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) Shall the greatest Saint claim even the smallest honor? whilst the Queen of all saints exclaims: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior; because

He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid" (Luke i. 46-48). When one falls sick and prepares for his passage to eternity, it is well to be like minded with St. Catherine of Siena in her last moments. Recollecting her great services to religion she detected the filthiness of pride in such thoughts; and then she said in all simplicity: "I render thanks to God, that in all my life I have never felt any vainglory." Was it not a summary of all virtue?—this sweet stream of self-abnegation which had fertilized the roots of every good act of her whole heroic career? Humility is therefore the gauge of all other excellencies; so says St. Teresa: "Let each one observe how much lowly mindedness he unfeignedly possesses, and he will be able to calculate how much progress he has made" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, ch. xii., 6).

There is one kind of pride whose power is subtle, because it is disguised as humility. It is a certain difficulty to believe in one's salvation—humility's distrust pallid with morbid forebodings. Or rather no form of humility at all, but rank pride in a masquerade of penitential meekness. For is it not equivalent to saying that I am too foul in my sinfulness for even infinite pity to take me into its arms? Beware of this, especially if you have a native bent to gloominess. If the fog of despondency fall upon you, look quickly towards Calvary; be in terror of arguing the case between your guilt and your Redeemer's mercy. Let the heavy heart simply suffer on, always in your usual devotions offering honor to God for His own sake alone, saved or not saved. John Tauler is among the most enlightened of the many teachers who treat of this pitiful trouble. Be sure that it will in due time be displaced by an immense joy of hope. Meanwhile name it and describe it each time you go to Confession.

Have you kept the promises of the past twelve months? If so, it is because you made them self-distrustfully and relying wholly on God. Once a poor sinner—aye a very detestable one but truly contrite—having made his confession, said this to the priest: "Now give it to me, Father. Don't spare me. I deserve it all and more."

Such a one knows what it means to repent; according to the Holy Spirit: "He that loveth correction loveth knowledge" (Prov. xii. 1). Humility is a virtue wide awake to opportunities. These come not wholly from our fellow mortals. True, many a humiliation comes from without; but the soul itself is jostled at every turn by disgraceful memories. We are ashamed (if we are wise enough) even of our good works, which abound in imperfections—like statues cut in marble that are full of flaws. As to the future, our misgivings should cause us to say with the Apostle: "I know how to be brought low" (Phil. iv. 12). Secretly, openly, in our own regard, in reference to God's rights, in reference to our fellow-men, in every outlook and inlook, we may find cause for chagrin and self-disenchantment. This is of particular value in preparing for our periodical confessions, when sin and its causes and its consequences are analyzed by memory, and reflection, and are by holy faith infused into our most essential thoughts.

No wonder that pious men love to be ignored, since to be disregarded by others, as well as to be self-ignored, is to them a quick relief from pain. Fénelon says that "virtue allows itself to be forgotten." Humility has this effect: that of all the topics grave or gay that a true Christian may choose to talk about in company with friends, he finds himself and his affairs the least worthy: he is not worth talking about. Of Père Lacordaire it was said by one who knew the great orator intimately, that "He was never heard to speak of himself in conversation, nor of what concerned him personally; and he would not allow any one else to do so." The same saintly Dominican went even far beyond, and readily revealed to others the sins of his unconverted youth. We may not feel his pleasure in doing the like of that, but at any rate we should envy him the glory of it. And, besides, not all the virtues of the saints are to be considered "more admirable than imitable." That same Lacordaire, if he got acquainted with a priest whom he learned to like, would show his affection by making to him his general confession. I may not do as much as that with my present scanty stock of humility, but at my monthly confession I ought to select some very shameful "sin of my past life" as a make-weight for lack of present sinfulness, rather than monotonously repeat littler offences over and over again. If I am done with my confession without being ashamed of myself, I have missed one of the most wholesome dishes of that penitential banquet.

There are two elements of guilt in every sin. One is the act itself—the guilty pleasure, or the greedy interest, or the malignant aversion. The other is the interior self-complacency. Now that is the essential malice of every sin. It is that which creates the selfishness and concupiscence and malignity of the sin; it is that which survives as a tendency after the deed is done or even pardoned; a living root for future sin. It is that which hides the wickedness of the sin from our eyes. Pride rankles in every wound of the human soul. It is only after this love of self has been overcome by the love of God by years of prayer and sacrament and providential trials, that we are freed from delusions, and can explore the depths of our malice; in a word, become humble. Self-love must be cast out as an unclean intruder, and the love of God take its place in our heart before we can see ourselves as we are.

And then a curious thing happens: our past sins are made of avail for perseverance in grace, because their memory puts us out of sorts with ourselves. The easy feeling of self-conceit is vanished; and although it surely returns again, we are never so smug as once we were. Humility is the staying quality in repentance as pride is the malicious quality in sinfulness. Our Lord showed St. Gertrude how the last state of penitence in a sincere soul may be made better than the first state of innocence. He revealed this to her: "If a person has a stain on his hand, in order to get it off he must wash his hand so hard that he makes it cleaner than it was before it was stained." And He also said this to her: "If you tear a rent in a fine silken robe and mend it skillfully with gold lace, the mending adds an additional adornment to the whole garment." Penitents, however, should have a practical view of things spiritual and watch their chances, so that opportunities to feel mean may not escape them. St. Alphonsus says: "All wish to be humble, but there are few that wish to be humbled" (*Novena of St. Teresa,* Fifth Day).

As related to our prayers, humility is high chamberlain and major-domo in their palace. Our thoughts of the temple of Jerusalem, which the Lord said His Father commanded to be called "a house of prayer" (Luke xix. 46), are always associated with the figure of a penitent, humbled, heartbroken publican, making a right prayer, and a proud Pharisee making a wrong prayer (Luke xviii. 10-13). The very sadness of a meek spirit is a sweet incense to God, for it is truth, and it throws itself on divine mercy with absolute submissiveness. St. Bernard says that humility is that sublime virtue which inspires efficacious prayer for heavenly wisdom concerning God and man, concerning one's self and one's neighbor—a knowledge which is not bought but bestowed, and which is wholly beyond the power of human effort to acquire by study: humility alone can be the cause of the infused illuminations of our better prayers.

It is a dreary prospect this incessant struggle against pride. No sooner is one ulcer healed than another breaks out, and when that is healed the first one has begun to ooze with fetid vainglory, or resistance to authority. So it seems. But let us not be disheartened. It is a comfort to know that in resisting pride we are (to change the comparison) fighting our main enemy, and that victory against him is victory everywhere. If the triumph be only for the present, yet it is always full of the spoils of merit, and the increment of the most necessary and knowledgeable of the moral virtues—for humility is that. Also remember that humility of heart means purity of heart in all that term's significations. Make a parallel between pride and lust. Lust is the filthier vice; but it does not rot the root of penance, which is a tendency to be humbled. A lustful man who is not proud is fair game for his good angel. If, on the contrary, he is of a haughty temper, he argues in defence of his badness, and will never repent. Or he at least palliates it, delays repentance, is not open to friendly admonition, makes lust a career, and—at last is he ever saved? Not unless some special mercy infuses humility strong and deep into his spirit.

II. Humility.

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Even our Savior marvelled at this deep humility on the part of one who, though now a believer, was bred a heathen, for he was an officer of the Roman army: "I say to you," exclaimed Jesus, "that I have not found so great faith in Israel." Humility is the virtue which is worthy to be the handmaid of so queenly a grace as that of holy faith.

Lowliness of heart is a peculiar trait of Christ's more fervent followers. St. Dominic was a wonderfully holy man, and his many miracles, some of them of the most amazing kind, must have given him (so we would think) an inkling of how dear he was to God. But yet before he came into any town he fell flat on the ground, and begged of God that the coming of such a sinner might not draw down His vengeance on the people.

This is an example of humility toward God. As to humility toward our fellowmen, it may thus be stated: God knows me as I have been, as I am now, and as I am capable of becoming in the future. The question of humility is whether I am willing that that knowledge shall be shared by my fellowmen. As to how God's knowledge of me shall be imparted to men, the principle is this: If I am humble, I shall let them know it according as God leads the way. This He does by the interior impulses of His grace, the happenings of His providence, and the prescriptions of an approved rule of life. But before all this lies the difficulty of persuading myself to adopt in my own convictions God's knowledge of my defects. In my ordinary spiritual moods I am by no means willing that I should myself share God's knowledge of my shortcomings, even in my most secret consciousness.

As pride is the essence of all vice, so it is the bane of all virtue, notably of the two nobler kinds, zeal for souls and the practice of prayer. As to the latter, meditation, dissociated from a feeling of abjection, St. Teresa calls "speculations" (*Way of Perfection,* Dalton, ch. xi., 5). In the same chapter the Saint says: "May the Son of God, for the sake of His Passion, deliver us from saying or deliberately thinking such things as: 'I am her senior in the order; I am older than she; I have done more work; she is better treated than I.'"

What proud soul is a docile pupil of Holy Wisdom? "In that same hour He rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and said: I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them to little ones" (Luke x. 21). Because the disciples were humble, they were made prudent and wise by paths running across lots. They wanted to be taught. They were grateful for teaching. Their spirit was uncritical. They stored the wisdom of the infinite God with all reverence, and they stood in awe of Jesus, its exponent. Those who come to God conscious of their own wisdom, have no room in their souls for His wisdom.

And yet humility is called weakness and cowardice, whilst pride is mistaken for courage and greatness of soul. Men are praised as spirited, self-reliant, true to self, who are only arrogant and contemptuous of their neighbors. Pride's vocabulary contains the stolen titles of many noble virtues. Nay, it will sometimes even parade in the lowly garb of meekness. Meanwhile, it is ever lying in wait to catch us in our weaker moments, which are not seldom when we are flushed with spiritual victory. If you overcome any other vice, you may rejoice and cry victory! If you cry victory after fighting pride, you have *ipso facto* fallen back under its dominion.

St. Francis Borgia was once found in a state of great agitation, and was asked: "What distresses you?" He answered: "Let me confide to you what happened me. I was engaged in meditation on humility, and I felt that, such had been my evil life, I ought to humble myself even at the feet of Judas. I began to imagine myself doing so, when what was my amazement to behold another person who had got there before me (John xii. 2-4). It was the Son of God, kneeling before the traitor, kissing and washing his feet."

Our Savior gave so many and such amazing examples of this virtue because we need them; so difficult, so perpetual must be our battle to obtain it. We dare never give up our efforts to be humble, never fancy that we have got humility, never think that our humiliations are excessive or undeserved or unprofitable or untimely, never pick and choose our degradations or wish to do so, or wish to select the persons who shall be privileged to inflict them. We must ever wish to have more and more disenchantment with self, ever pray for deeper lowliness of spirit. Such is the characteristic state of mind of one striving for perfection. Thus wrote Blessed Julie Billiart of her Order: "What a large heart one must have to be a sister of Notre Dame! What strong medicine one must be able to swallow!" Not only of that community, but of all communities must this be said, and of every Christian state of life whatsoever.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

I. Brotherly Love.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

So universal a virtue as fraternal charity, my brethren, is worthy of frequent meditation; and although we have several times asked you to consider it, we do not hesitate again to discourse upon it. St. Paul constantly returned to it in his epistles, and our Redeemer, Who did not hesitate to "lay down His life" to approve it (John xv. 13), was never tired of enforcing it upon His followers. Coldness towards this divine precept is the chill of spiritual death; a languid desire to love and serve our neighbor is an omen of disregard for God's own rights, according to the beloved disciple: "And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God loveth also his brother" (1 John iv. 21). When will kindly thoughts and generous deeds towards our neighbor have their due weight in our souls? Not till the cross of Christ is lifted high and bright above us, and its inspiration takes the place of unreasoning instinct.

Yes, our feelings must be likened to Christ's. Once during His later days of sojourn among us, Jesus said: "I have a baptism wherewith I must be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" (Luke xii. 50.) As if to say: O cross of love! when wilt thou be given to Me. O pangs of death! how I long for you, that I may suffer and die that My loved ones "may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John x. 10). Of some marvels of love Jesus has a monopoly, but in love of our neighbor He is but our senior partner, and He invites us to a full share of the common toils, whilst He promises an overflowing abundance of the profits. For St. Peter says: "For unto this are you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter ii. 21). Now the Blessed Sacrament, being the copious fountain of the grace of brotherly love, is to be received and adored with that virtue well in mind. Yet listen to this: we knew a man who was a frequent communicant, and also faithfully spent good time in a daily visit to It. Yet meanwhile he was very censorious in his family, and all day long he scattered bitter admonitions. He seemed to go to the church as a cannoneer goes to his caisson, to get ammunition to explode in the ranks of the enemy.

The Holy Spirit bids us to catch "the little foxes that destroy the vines" (Cant. ii. 15). St. Francis de Sales takes this to mean those aversions and repugnances which injure the peace of families, sometimes seriously. "They are the temptations even of saints," he insists.

And we may add they are the very plague of ordinary Christians, and must be strangled in their birth. Not only so; but in our calmer moments, and especially in our daily prayers, we must be beforehand with them, never failing to adore the Precious Blood of our Savior, in anticipation of the danger of shedding so much as one little drop of our neighbor's blood by a cruel jest or a rude refusal—catching the foxes of our vineyard, that is to say of our home, whilst they are little and are just developing their hurtful tendencies in our thoughts. Our words in the family circle should all be like the dove which Noe sent out of the ark when he began to hope that the great flood was at an end—the bird of hope and peace came back to him " in the evening, carrying a bough of an olive tree, with green leaves, in her mouth. Noe therefore understood that the waters were ceased upon the earth " (Gen. viii. 11). So let not our words be provoking, but peaceable and soothing.

With many a Christian, my brethren, the main good thing in all his dealings with others is the holding back of sudden impulses to anger. Sometimes it comes from a chafe and burn of inward feeling. Resist it, we exhort you, with thoughts of the sweetness of Christ's peace, saying within yourself: I had rather see peace in this man's face than the crushed feeling of defeat; I am mainly desirous of peace, for my Master is the " Prince of Peace " (Isaias ix. 6); I can postpone this affair, which is degenerating into a wrangle; but peace? its need is now and always. Furthermore we can recall our own sins against God, for the dread of His judgments serves the interests of mutual good will; according to the Son of Sirach: " Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbor " (Ecclus. xxviii. 8). You remember reading of those philosophers of ancient times who spent their lives striving to discover some drink that would cure all diseases, and make bodily life perpetual—the elixir of life they named it. And others would mix molten metals for years, hoping finally to get a blend whose touch turned every metal into gold —the philosopher's stone they called it. Now à Kempis says this: "A good peaceable man turns all things to good" (*Imitation*, Book II., ch. iii.). He has got the elixir of life, this good, kindly man. His prayers are the unseen atmosphere of gentle forbearance among friends and relatives; his words are the balm of the bitterest wounds we can suffer from—wounded sensibilities. He has found the fabled philosopher's stone, for his very entrance among a quarrelsome party changes the dross and slag of quarrelling into the pure gold of cheerful patience. Blessed is the capitalist whose riches are good words; blessed is the warrior whose triumph is adorned with the trophies of peace. Little do some of us dream that however different may be the vocations of Christians, the universal vocation and the holiest of callings is that of bestowing the peace of God upon his warring children. Few realize that no argument is so well won as that which crowns both disputants with the laurels of peace. The glory of many a life is principally that of which the Apostle boasts: "For our glory is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart, and sincerity of God, and not in carnal wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world: and more abundantly towards you" (2 Cor. i. 12).

Consider that when the roses fade in our gardens with the decline of summer, the thorns remain. But it must not be so in our life's garden. When the day is done, the thorns of our talk and our work must be so little as to be unnoticed in our associates' memory, whilst the roses of our goodness are still fresh and fragrant. One might complain and say: Do you want me to be a milk-sop? never to dispute? never to chide? Alas, my brethren, that the strong and masculine virtue of kindness should be flouted, and a man who will not quarrel be nicknamed and scoffed at. Sincere charity is not cowardice but bravery. The fearlessness of God is in the heart and upon the lips of a peaceable Christian. It is no easy thing actually to be convinced that it is more blessed to be humiliated than triumphant. Do we want you to be a milk-sop? Better that a thousand times than a household terror. Victories there are according to God, and these are of peace and good will. The gentler natures are the most valiant. David was of a forgiving temperament and Saul of an envious one. Yet not Saul but David slew Goliath; and the matrons and maidens of Israel sang the song of the Holy Spirit when they sweetly chanted: "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Kings xviii. 7)—Saul, savage and revengeful; David, meek and patient. It is precisely an aggressive character who must painfully learn to be mollified easily and angered reluctantly. No one is so like God as a positive man whose whole strength is for peace. When granting any endowment of force the Creator administers this warning: "Let peace be in thy strength, and abundance in thy towers" (Ps. cxxi. 7). Strong: he can command peace. Peaceable: he can entice submission. This is the kind of men that families and cities and nations need, strong and good and peaceable. An orator who is not a good peaceable man, is only half an orator. Your friend is but half a friend except you know him to be too kind ever to hurt your feelings. It is plain as day that a Christian is only half a Christian until he appreciates the gravity of ugly behavior—until he sincerely loves to make people happy. Zeal for good is but half-ripe zeal if it be not glad to make people happy, whether it can make them good or not. St. Paul highly commends anyone who has washed the feet of their fellow Christians (1 Tim. v. 10)—literally a lowly service, but rated high for the motive back of it. And when I forgive an injury, ignore it, never bring it back to my talk, or, if I could so far master myself, even to my most secret thoughts, I wash my enemy's feet, and I share a precious merit with him. Two gifts are hereby granted me: one is the power to forgive—the choicest privilege of the Son of God Himself; the other is the privilege of suffering shame for Christ's sake, a boon gladly welcomed by the Apostles, who went from the presence of their persecutors "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 41). It is indeed an apostolic custom, rooted in the teaching, life, and death of Christ, to make all conduct kindly for the love of God; to yield submission lovingly to lawful authority, and, as far as it may be candid and honest to do so, to yield one's views and opinions also; to make the sweetness of peace among brethren a prime element of all religion; to admonish reluctantly even when forced to do so, and then "in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. vi. 1); to make progress by persuasion alone; and to pray hard for friend and foe. The zeal of a true Christian is —if we are to believe St. Francis de Sales—"to make efforts at bettering things without alarm and noise, so that the blessings of heaven may come upon earth like the dew upon the grass, which one finds there without seeing it fall" (*Letters to Persons in Religion,* Mackey, viii.).

II. Willful Anger.

"And rising up, He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

These words of our Redeemer, and the miracle they describe, may be taken to express His power over our angry passions, especially in our family life. Not seldom do we pass a stormy time at home. It is no small miracle for our Lord's grace to soothe into tranquility the boiling waves of our dissensions.

Sometimes the trouble arises from indiscreet correction. To reprove others is often a duty, but always a perilous one, for only really devout souls know how to admonish, and those who are established in virtue can alone profit by indiscriminate admonitions; as King Solomon says: "A reproof availeth more with a wise man, than a hundred stripes with a fool" (Prov. xvii. 10). But, on the other hand, none of us is so big a fool as not to know that by God's law he is subject to his parents and elders in this matter; and this voice of conscience should be a corrective of folly as well as of wickedness.

Often enough our principal need is the suppressing of personal aversions born of difference of temperament.

Some of us seem to think that virtue can be had for the asking—any and all virtue. By no means. Asking, when efficacious, is of a piece with working, and prayer and labor are the right and left hand of spiritual achievement. Pray for a quiet temper. But be sure to cultivate kind feelings by thinking of the cross of Christ. Study the beauty of a patient spirit. Weigh carefully the fairness of this proverb: Put yourself in his place. Is he dull? Lend him in all kindliness your brightness. Is he peevish? Share your restfulness with him. Is he depressed in spirits? Give him a plentiful gift of your own lightsome and sanguine temper. All know that they are bound to forgive injuries; but most of us limit this duty to repeating pious formulas, and what St. Francis de Sales stigmatizes as "ceremonious mildness" (*Devout Life,* Part III., ch. viii.).

When the patriarch Joseph affectionately dismissed his brethren, he bade them: "Be not angry with one another by the way" (Gen. xlv. 24). My brethren, our tasks are hard enough, our pilgrimage long enough, our enemies numerous and bitter enough, that we should at least have an agreeable time among ourselves. This can only be if we provide sparingly for our own rights and generously for others' rights; whilst we concern ourselves constantly to increase the common stock of good feeling.

Who can work with one who blazes up quickly and spits fire continually; least of all who can play with him? Blessed is the Christian who is temperamentally incombustible. For one thing, he accumulates no unpleasant memories in his own soul. Scarcely anything is more bitter than our own remembrance of rough language we have used to one who has a right to our love. Once an old man told us, that when he saw the word *push* printed in a book or newspaper, or heard it spoken, it cut him deep, because he instantly remembered that when he was a sinful young man, he pushed his mother in a fit of anger. We may surmise that by these sad recollections he was undergoing his purgatory before his time. Think of pushing one's mother! Well does the Sage in Scripture say: "Anger hath no mercy, nor fury when it breaketh forth" (Prov. xxvii. 4). Anger is the kind of a tyrant that the elder Herod was, who not only put to death the little Innocents who were strangers to him, but murdered his wife and several of his children. Not murder of others to be sure, but yet their great misery is the sin of the irascible Christian; and if it be only a venial offence, it is like that disease called the itch, which kills nobody, but makes many a one's life quite unbearable. To consider the ways of some parents, you would think that they had much rather be feared than loved. On principle, as it were, and as a regular and standard condition, they esteem scolding every way preferable to kindliness. To consider the ways of some children, you would think that their worst enemy was a parent, who had suffered many years of trial and toil for them, and always devotedly loved them.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

I. Delay of Repentance.

"Suffer both to grow until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn; but the wheat gather ye into my barn."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

In this parable of the wheat and the cockle our Redeemer explains why it is that God does not condemn sinners to hell as soon as they have declared against Him, and leagued themselves with the devil. It is for the sake of their friends and relatives who are good Christians that bad men are thus spared "until the harvest," lest in gathering up the cockle to be brunt the wheat also should be hurt—good men's souls tortured by the loss of the bad ones whom they love. So it was of old. You will remember that when Abraham pleaded with God to save Sodom from destruction if even ten just souls should be found in the wicked city, He answered him: "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten" (Gen. xviii. 32).

That is one reason; but of course there are others, notably the divine mercy and the prayers of the saints.

Meantime the fate of the wicked is in their own hands. They, however, gradually grow accustomed to sinning, and repentance grows difficult as sin grows easy. What is repentance? If it is genuine and lasting it is a real hatred of sin; more, it is love of virtue. Repentance is, therefore, a reversal of one's loves and hatreds. Now loves and hatreds are fastened on us by what are called habits. The soul in that respect is something like the body. Let a boy's right hand he injured and unused for some length of time, and he becomes left-handed by habit. So do men, who quit doing good and continue for months and years doing bad, grow wicked by habit. Why do men become attached to home, though it be but a barren farm in a lonely neighborhood? Why do some persons even die of homesickness, though their home was not at all attractive? Habit is the word that answers these questions. And if home has been beautiful and full of pleasure, so does its power gradually sink the deeper into men's hearts by habit. Well, my brethren, we meet with sinners grown so fond of vice by long-established habit that when they attempt to become good they are hindered by homesickness for vice and immorality: habit, as the saying is, has become second nature.

It is at first hard to commit grievous sin; it takes persuasion; and the way of going about is timid and awkward. And then there is the shock of remorse. Often enough the first sin is the last; so strong is the revulsion that repentance is not only immediate but permanent. But if sin be repeated again and again, a bad habit is formed, a depraved taste is acquired. Little by little all the ways and means are learned; and after a while one becomes a proficient in wrong doing. The knowledge of sinful pleasures is widened. Worst of all, conscience is dulled, and after some time spent in evil conduct, its enfeebled voice is hardly heard; it is lost amid the sweet invitation of vice. At last by constant indulgence the sinner is almost undisturbed in his fatal security. Mark, then, that repentance means a complete change from all this. Rooted habits must be uprooted, pleasures in solid possession of the heart must be totally dispossessed: the sinner must hate what for years he has loved as his only real joy, and he must love what he has long ago rated as wholly unloveable, perhaps has even despised. Brethren, it is an awful thing to make little of the virtuous and self-restrained life of a practical Catholic.

Notice the failure of the divine calls to repentance. The sinner has become not only habituated to sinning, but habituated to rejecting God's grace. This is itself a stupendous sin, an ominous sin. If he happens to hear a powerful sermon on God's justice, he votes himself (in his sub-consciousness) an exception to its rigors: has he not proved it by his years and years of impunity in wickedness? Such a man becomes like a soldier who, because he has passed unhurt through one battle after another for years, dreams that he has a charmed life. If the habitual sinner does make an attempt at repentance, the effect upon him is too often but passing; the surface has been stirred by a sudden panic, but the more interior life is hardly touched. What continue to be his real inclinations? What company does he actually crave? and what amusements? The patriarch Job shows the great power of wickedness, fierce and enduring: "The habits of his youth are in the old man's bones, and they shall sleep with him in the dust" (Job. xx. 11). Yea, they are sometimes even in the young man's bones. Sacred influences may affect the surface of a soul well addicted to evil ways, but the bones, that is to say, the thoughts, are still infected, the emotions and feelings are yet tainted, the memory reeks with evil. To convert such a one *really* is like making him learn a new trade, or changing him from being left-handed into being right-handed. You have seen a creeping plant growing about a tree, covering the trunk of it with its tendrils, running out upon and around every branch, its leaves everywhere among the leaves of the tree, growing and fattening on the tree, enwrapping it and choking it till it is almost dead. So does vice creep into and about a man's better nature; his thoughts are full of it; his heart's core soaked with evil tendencies; living roots of wickedness are there; his language, his reading, all are full of evil. Brethren, nothing short of a miracle can set such a man free.

Like a hangman who has grown used to corpses and blood, cries of horror and of despair, so does an obstinate sinner become regardless to the cries of remorse. He may not exactly treat these divine reproaches with defiance, but he is ready with excuses and postponements—delay is his unfailing resource. And after a time he is tempted to soothe his alarm with the drug of doubt—faith grows weak as vice grows strong. How can the sinner help saying: Perhaps good people exaggerate the guilt of sin; perhaps they exaggerate the risk one runs by not repenting here and now; perhaps God is kinder to poor weak creatures like me than good people suppose. And, my brethren, though faith still may hold on, it is like an overstrained rope tugging and chafing and beginning to snap its fibres: it may give way at any moment. Meantime mortal sins follow one another without reasoning or effort: he sins as it were by instinct.

Now what does it mean, this playing fast and loose with the protests of conscience? My brethren, it really means putting off Jesus Christ, baffling Him and making Him wait. The sinner's Creator and Savior says: "My son, I call upon you to repent of your sins." The sinner answers: "No; not now—later on." "But (we may so interpret our Lord's further appeal) you have thus set Me aside over and over again, and broken your promise as often as you have made it." The sinner answers: "This promise I will keep, give me only time." Again the Redeemer insists: "But I have given you time before, and you have abused it." The sinner answers: "I cannot help it: I will not repent now." My brethren could sin be more deliberate? could malice be more willful? It is of this class and their response to God's call that the prophet speaks: "O Lord,......Thou hast struck them, and they have not grieved; Thou hast bruised them, and they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than the rock, and they have refused to return" (Jer. v. 3).

But it would be a mistake to suppose that remorse of conscience has had no effect whatsoever on them, or the admonitions of pious friends. These influences have had a powerful effect—dread and horror and foreboding of an evil end have filled their souls. A powerful effect: but something more powerful is in their souls. It is a strong and well-natured love for unclean pleasures, for the fiery joy of drink, for getting and keeping money unjustly, for liberty to do any evil thing they please. O my brethren! pray for them; pray for sinners who when God says, "Come!" are rash enough to parley with Him about the time when they shall obey Him. Not long will you have to wait till you see one of them and then another stricken suddenly by the hand of infinite justice—those worst transgressors, those most fearfully wicked men. God's word at last comes true: "I will pick out from among you the transgressors and the wicked" (Ezech. xx. 38).

The time comes when such a man, so evil minded, as deeply corrupted, seemingly cannot repent. Perhaps it was a mission that he rejected, and which turned out to be the last offer of grace. Perhaps it was when a patient friend exhorted him to make his Easter Communion, and he laughed and made light of it; saying then in his heart as he had often said before: "I may do it next year." But he was destined to spend next year in eternity. Or was it that gentle but yet terrible whisper of conscience bidding him to lose no time, no, not a day, but to be reconciled to God at once? was it that secret, urgent, piercing call that he struggled with and postponed obeying? and that was never to be repeated: was that the final summons? For presently it is his name that is spoken among his friends with horror: He is dead! See that group bending over a newspaper: his name is printed among those of the drowned in the wreck of a steamer. Or a pale messenger comes to his home, soon followed by an ambulance bearing his dead body—he had left home in sound health a few hours before. Or, again, there stands a priest at his sick bed, dismayed to find him unconscious, sinking away into death, wholly out of reach of all priestly help—a priest who had been with him previously, but had been parleyed with and postponed; as God had been many a time before. But now the postponement has proved fatal.

We meet with men who, coming towards the end, are reckless enough to say to themselves: "If I did not return to God in full health, I am not going to do it now simply because I am taken down sick." And so they die. Others—alas, my brethren, what a spectacle!—who, having been brought up good Catholics, nevertheless in their last moments reject priest and sacraments openly. And so they die. Others die after receiving the sacraments unmistakably only in order to be rid of the importunities of their devout friends and of the priest. Some die with every sign of despair. Others we meet with who on their deathbeds receive the sacraments with apparent sincerity, and then recover health; but on getting out of doors, even before full recovery, they prove the mockery of a deathbed repentance by presently going back to their evil ways.

In view of all this, I beg you all to lay to heart the warning of the Apostle: "Thinkest thou......that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. ii. 3-6).

II. Excommunication.

"Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said, No: lest perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

The farmer in the parable was distressed that cockle was found in a field sowed entirely with good wheat;

and he was angered against the enemy who had done him this injury. But he considered it a dangerous thing to try to root out the weed while the grain was growing; better wait "until the harvest," he said.

Our Lord hereby teaches us one of the reasons why He hinders His servants, the Pope and Bishops of His Church, from excommunicating all hard sinners and casting them out of her visible communion. That reason is the close relationship these sinners bear to God's true friends, faithful Catholics. For example, it would be an intolerable evil for a Catholic family to have their father posted up as excommunicated, even though he richly deserved it for his wickedness. The very roots of life among us are mingled of good and bad souls, whom God's providence has thus united that the faithful souls may win the unfaithful ones to repentance.

But it would be an error to suppose that a man in mortal sin suffers no manner or kind of excommunication. He knows that God has cut him off by a secret anathema. The sentence is suspended as to its final and irrevocable promulgation. Yet he feels that he is ranked among God's enemies from the moment he willfully rebels against Him. This is especially true of willful neglect of the Easter Communion. As an enemy of God he is under the ban of God. He is no more to be compared to a friend of God than a devil to an angel, except that he has until his death, "the time of the harvest," to repent and be forgiven, and is constantly being called to repentance. The Holy Spirit stings him with reproaches of conscience; his truest friends now and again admonish him; their example distresses him; his occasional presence at Mass softens his obstinacy; adversity tames his pride; prosperity arouses his gratitude to his heavenly Father, and finally he is moved to repentance.

And this brings us to another reason why Holy Church wisely refrains from publicly excommunicating ordinary sinners, limiting that dreadful penalty to such sins as border on denial of the faith, or are of a public and very scandalous nature. But to openly excommunicate common sinners like blasphemers and drunkards and adulterers, would throw them, in very many cases, into despair. There is all the difference in the world between a man who says: "I am a sinner and a hard sinner, but I am a Catholic, and I can still hold the name and cherish the hopes of a wayward child of God's Church;" and the same man stripped of even outward fellowship with the Church, openly branded with a dreadful stigma, and compelled to say to himself: "I am an outlaw." He feels like Cain did: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon" (Gen iv. 13). Therefore, the principal good that comes from excommunication is that by the spectacle of its severity it saves others, sometimes at the dreadful expense of the one on whom it is inflicted.

Meantime every one in mortal sin should feel that he has cut himself off from God—he is self-excommunicated, as we have already said. A holy fear creeps on him in his better moments. He recalls the words of this parable, often heard by him when read at Mass to the people; and he knows that he is only a poisonous weed among the Lord's good wheat. And he also recalls our Lord's prophecy of the last judgment, when He will send His mighty angels into the field of the whole world, and separate the cockle from the wheat, the bad from the good; his own fate to be cast into everlasting fire: the eternal harvest is come and he is not saved.

Thus does God through His Church mingle mercy with justice. Meantime she calls on all good people to treat their sinful friends with the greatest possible kindness, always praying for them, remembering Christ's words: "That you may be the children of your Father, Who is in heaven, Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 45)—not failing, however, to avail themselves of every opportunity to affectionately counsel them to return to God's friendship by sincere repentance.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

I. The Union of Faith, Hope, and Love.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

In this little and very striking parable, our Savior speaks of that kingdom of God which is within us (Luke xvii. 21); and the leaven means the supreme virtue of that interior realm, namely, the love of God, which is the inspiration of all our hopes and the saving force of all our faith: according to the Apostle: "Now there remaineth faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. xiii. 13). Especially is love of Jesus Crucified the only reliance of penitent sinners for both pardon and perseverance. Let us meditate on these points.

It is the love of God which saves our faith from doubt. For although good reading sheds light on our minds about divine truth, and the company and words of intelligent Catholics give us a feeling of courage, the love of Jesus Christ brings us into the very focus of light, and places the heavenly Teacher upon His throne within our souls. Sometimes we are asked: Why is willful doubt a sin against the Christian faith? Learn by a comparison. In a mental crisis of morality, to hesitate between spiritual cleanness and uncleanness is to be lost. So in matters of faith; willfully to doubt is to be faithless. But when true love for God enters the soul, it dissipates doubt no less efficaciously than it banishes concupiscence. Consider it practically: a simple soul is going to be betrayed into heresy by a false teacher; and this is because his amiable natural qualities attract his admiration and win his affection: these pleasant ways and kindly manners—perhaps even generous favors—win his love, and thereby gain his belief in errors against God's Church. But if his love is fixed true and strong in Christ and His Church, with that divine love he combats the human love which would mislead him, and he expels it from his heart. It is with the keen glance of love that he detects the demon of heresy under the disguise of "an angel of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14). All those who stand against truth stand against love—it is thus a Catholic looks upon men who impugn Catholic truth. It is like the deeper forms of human loyalty. You love your mother, not because you have examined matters between yourself and her, and found the balance of reasons on that side, but because you are her child; you are in a sweet stream of influence that masters you. Reasons enough there are, but this is the supreme reason; a son must love his mother because son and mother are so created. This closes the question, shutting out not only doubt but discussion. This it is that obligates conscience. This afterwards takes up reason after reason and enables one to appreciate them, and this makes his love the chief reason of them all. So are we related to God and Christ and His Church in matters of belief. The grace of faith, not without but above reasoning, shows us God to be our source of light. It is a force as sweet as that of instinctive love of child to parent and a thousand times as strong—and leavening all arguments with love. Hence does the Apostle tell us that it is "with the heart we believe unto justice" (Rom. x. 10). Things of the mind have place in a Catholic's religious belief, such as proofs and arguments; but the things of the heart have the highest place, such as honor and valor and loyalty, all expressed in the word love.

As of believing God's truth so also of trusting in God's will to save us, love of Him is the main because the sanctifying force. Love is the soul of hope, and love argues for hope as follows. To give is natural to God, that is to say, it is necessary to His existence. And His natural, necessary, and spontaneous gift, what can it be else than Himself? for He is an infinite giver: Himself is His gift, namely, His Only-begotten Son, true God with Himself. For God the Father is God because He begets the Son, and begets Him in love so perfect that the same Love is the Divinity itself in the Person of the Holy

Ghost. What then may not we hope from God if the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of love, be given us? And He is given us with sanctifying grace. May we, must we, not expect therewith the gift of the divine Son—since God is impelled by the law of His existence to give forth the Son in infinite generosity to all who are in His love, namely, in His Spirit? That are we, for we have His Spirit by sanctifying grace. Therefore does the Apostle magnify our confidence, saying: "Hope confoundeth not: because the love of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5).

Once divine love leavens our thoughts, we rest secure in hope. It is not by calculation, but by love we measure the strength of temptations and the resources of virtue, and prepare for the conflict. "He that spared not even His own Son," exclaims St. Paul, "but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, together with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) In the same spirit do we bid defiance to all of God's rivals, as the same Apostle shows, in words of marvelous confidence, a few verses further on: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? ......But in all these things we overcome because of Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 35-37). These are the thoughts that should be with us as we look forward to temptations, make ready for trials, or tremble at the prospect of death. No matter how weak I may be, mine is the strength of God, if I will but love Him. No matter how cowardly I may feel, if I love God I may confidently trust that my death shall be brave.

Love, too, is the leaven of our hopes of advancement in virtue. Be quite sure, my brethren, that it is never too late to begin a perfect life. Perfect love of God is not, strictly speaking, the ripe fruit of a slowly-matured character, formed by many succeeding years of devout practices. However sure of highest results such a course may be, the power of loving God is first and last and always a pure boon from heaven. It comes from God's unconditioned bounty, which chooses its own times for its beginning and its completing. And a buoyant, valorous feeling of hope is itself a form of love. Many saints have begun only in gray hairs to overstep the barriers of mediocrity. Many ordinary Christians have for years lingered on in only a purposeful heart to be as holy as their living hopes pictured, and as finally they actually became. St. Ivo was at first but a young lawyer in Orleans and in Paris. His mother used to say to him: "Ivo, thou oughtest to live as becometh a saint." And he would always answer: "Mother, I hope yet to be a saint." And this hope gradually took on so deep a longing of love as to become a resistless incentive to the heroic deeds which finally proclaimed his sainthood.

If the soul's love of its Maker and Savior should thus inspire its faith in His truth and its trust in His promises, much rather should that love be the motive of its repentance from sin. Such was the happy lot of Mary Magdalen, whose dreadful wickedness was for that reason so universally and entirely pardoned; for her Redeemer said of her: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (Luke vii. 47). I love thee! Ah, my brethren, that is a solemn word between us mortals, and is seldom spoken except to one extremely near, a wife or husband, a venerated parent, an idolized child. We reserve a word so sacred to the more hidden communications of even the tenderest relationships. But not so between God and us. By His command, no less than by His counsel, we must say to Him every day and every hour: My God I love Thee! In my faith in Thee, in my hope, and above all in my repentance for offending Thee, I love Thee.

This is especially true of our confessions, my brethren, for in the sacrament of Penance love is the leaven of "the three measures of meal," which may in this connection be made to mean contrition, confession, and satisfaction. Fear of hell may bring us to the feet of God's priest, and open our reluctant lips truthfully to reveal our wickedness; but a tenderer feeling than fear inspires us whilst we receive the absolution: such is the essential good of the sacrament. The whole glory of confession is the changing of a fearful heart into a loving one. And is not this necessarily God's will? Who would rather be feared than loved? Not God surely, whose primary commandment is thus promulgated by our great Lover, Jesus Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength" (Mark xii. 30). His power is infinite, yet the whole infinitude of His will with us is love. And this is true even after we have defied His power by our sins. His glory—was it not awfully profaned by our wickedness? Yet when we return to Him, He would have us love Him rather than glorify Him—cling to Him as a wayward child to a forgiving father, promise Him our loyalty rather than our adoration, if the two homages could be separated. One day our Lord appeared to St. Catherine of Genoa, at a time when she was tempted to despair; and she beheld Him bleeding from His many wounds; the blood seemed pouring in a stream from His body as He passed her. And He turned and said to her: "Seest thou this blood? It is shed for love of thee, and in satisfaction for thy sins." At these words she was pierced with a deep wound of love for Him; at the same time her tendency to despair vanished away. It shall not be otherwise with you, my brethren, if you arouse within your souls a loving feeling of gratitude to Christ Crucified, especially when you are preparing to go to Confession.

II. Faith and Good Works.

"Being mindful of the work of your faith, and labor, and charity."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

The Apostle, when praising these favorite converts of his, joins with their faith, which he lauds to the skies, the cognate virtues of diligence and activity—"work and labor"—and then the supreme virtue of all, namely, charity. Indeed, my brethren, to know the truths of our religion well and efficaciously is to have a special grace, which is called infused knowledge. This is won by diligence in all kinds of devout practices, and by every form of love for God and man. Let us briefly consider the relation of faith and good works.

Infused knowledge knows truth inside and outside; acquired knowledge only outside. Thomas à Kempis, speaking of reading over God's prophets, says: "They give the words, Thou alone, O God, impartest the spirit" (*Imitation*, iii., 2). The innermost meaning of religion, as well as its best expression, is reserved for devout souls exclusively: "The mouth of the just man shall meditate wisdom, and his tongue shall speak judgment" (Prov. x. 31).

The Apostle Thomas said of our Lord's Resurrection: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John xx. 25). This is a glaring case of reason untrue to itself. Had Thomas been truer to reason, he would have accepted competent evidence, the unanimous testimony of ten truthful eye witnesses. For him this is not enough; he exacts more. One doubter defies ten believers. Thus has skepticism ever acted, and thus unreason is ever at the root of unbelief.

But notice how Jesus saved Thomas: "Put in thy finger hither, and see My hand; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side; and be not faithless but believing" (John xx. 27). Jesus saved His skeptical follower by granting him the evidence he demanded. But will He do the like for every skeptical mind? I cannot presume on that—I dare not.

Jesus acted very differently from Thomas. If the disciple was exacting and over-exacting of evidence of the Resurrection, Jesus was lenient and over-lenient in His way of setting him right; otherwise Thomas would have been lost. Let me in like cases both imitate the example of Jesus and be warned by that of Thomas. Dreadful words: "I will not believe!"—followed too often by the yet more fatal ones: "I cannot believe!" But from this fate our kind Master saved Thomas, though he stood for a brief space in great peril. And then our Savior cautioned all His followers to the end of time: " Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

Nevertheless, I am not going into scruples about my faith, which is to my thoughts and affections what warmth is to my blood. We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him. Please God, I shall keep the faith. But that must be because I shall fight the good fight (2 Tim. iv. 7). St. Paul was the foremost teacher of faith in the whole world, yet was he not above contemplating the possibility of becoming a castaway from the faith (1 Cor. ix. 27).

But what of one who keeps his faith and yet becomes a castaway from God's love? What doth it profit a man if he have all faith and can remove mountains, and yet hath not God's love? (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?" (James ii. 14.)

Let men boast, if they will, of a high mindedness superior to any authority but that of Rome itself, and unregardful of the views of great Catholic teachers and of venerable schools of Catholic learning. But for our part we see the divine guidance in the current, and especially in the concurrent opinions of those whom Providence has drawn into the great scholastic vocation. We must confess that a doctrinal opinion which has no standing in the schools of Catholic learning, has no standing in our mind. We are not censorious; but, on the other hand, we cannot adhere to a doctrinal or religious view entirely novel.

Nor can we sympathize with the sore feelings of those who chafe under Roman censorship, even when submitting to it. It is the Vicar of Christ who smoothes the way to truth for timid and self-distrustful souls; and it is the same holy authority that hinders self-confident spirits from over-eager and dangerous doctrinal progress. Just as it is in the secular state: the same power that makes good and smooth roads for all wayfarers, arrests some rash citizens for fast driving on them.

The light and warmth of the sun is the life of all vegetation, and it is the farmer's most generous benefactor; but without rain it is his deadliest enemy. It is so with knowledge, especially with learning. Its bright light and heat must be constantly tempered by the gentle showers of lowly thoughts, and by meek submission to lawful authority.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

I. Vocations.

"Go you also into My vineyard."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

THE parable of the call of the laborers into the vineyard, and their payment after the day's work, is meant by our Lord to show God's vocation of souls both to salvation and to perfection. On the latter calling, my brethren, we may dwell with profit to-day.

St. Paul names the universal Christian state as a vocation. Addressing "all the saints" and "all the faithful" at Ephesus, he says: "Brethren, I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called" (Eph. iv. 1). And the holy promises of baptism are immemorially called vows. The same Apostle in the next chapter of Ephesians again includes everybody in the exhortation "to advance towards the perfect man, in the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ." Our present Holy Father, Pius X., calls attention to this all-embracing counsel in one of his Encyclicals. A most interesting subject is this, my brethren; but we must ask you to wait for its treatment at another time. For at present we are to consider the special call which invites men to enter the priesthood, or causes men and women to join religious communities. Everyone knows that the pursuit of perfection is organized into separate associations for particular ends. Each of these orders, as they are called, has its own inspirations, history, saints, and other holy personages; and its rule of life is the Gospel of our Lord, arranged appropriately to the purposes in view. Let us consider how one passes from the ranks of "all the faithful" into one of these specially organized bodies.

The Apostle says that "every one hath his proper gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. vii. 7). And each one learns just where God would lead him by various plain signs. But outranking all other signs is the purpose of perfection, an interior sign which is a powerful drawing away from ordinary human existence towards a divinely holy one. A general state of piety overspreads the thoughts and sanctifies the conduct of such a person. A sharp purpose of advancing deeper into religious conditions accompanies it—holy progress rules supreme. In this soul's vocabulary there are two words never found together, the word good and the word enough. What is good is never good enough to one who is being drawn onward to closest union with that Good which is infinite.

This explains why so many vocations to particular orders are generated at missions or other such spiritual exercises. No order of religion is mentioned in the sermons, but from beginning to end the worth of the soul, the infinite fullness of God's claims upon it, the folly of earth's joys, and the lessons of death and judgment, heaven and hell—all these tremendous spiritual forces are driven home. Providence soon provides the pointer to a particular and definite outlet for the overflow of the spirit's fervor. Sometimes it is acquaintanceship with some priest, either religious or diocesan, or with a member of a brotherhood, or a nun; sometimes a mighty impression of love for some religious institute is gained in the person's reading of history; not seldom the institute joined is the positive suggestion of a spiritual guide.

St. John of God in the earlier era of his marvelous career was so deeply moved by the sight of any poor man, that while yet a layman he often gave away his outer garments, and returned home stripped to his shirt and breeches. This caused something like scandal, but it was the origin of his founding his order for the care of the sick and the insane. For the bishop, to prevent John from thus acting, chose a religious garb for him, and compelled him to wear it—something decent that he could not give away. Such was the beginning of his community. But his real calling from the Holy Spirit was given him long before he got his habit. This happened from his attending a mission preached by Blessed John of Avila, during which he was almost driven wild by the realization of God's majesty and his own sinfulness.

Now it is that development into a definite choice of a community, or of the diocesan or religious priesthood, which is commonly and not unreasonably called a vocation. Its validity is thus tested by St. Francis de Sales: "A good vocation is simply a firm and constant will which one has to serve God in the way and in the places that Almighty God has called him to. That is the best mark that one can have of showing when a vocation is good" (*Letters to Persons in Religion,* Mackey, p. 385). Thus the best mark is simple enough; and yet it is essentially interior, "a firm and constant will." Soon it is externalized under the indispensable guidance of one's Father confessor.

When God speaks, man's part is quickly to kneel and listen and adore. The vocational inspiration, whether it come of a sudden at a retreat, or gradually by the cumulative and wave-like movements of interior fear and love of God, is always sweet, humble, tranquil, very devotional, and glad to obey; and withal it is hot to act. But this last quality needs to be moderated, lest the very spark of divine fire, as St. Francis de Sales calls a vocation (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 134), should be trampled into darkness by headlong hurry. This is guarded against by wise counsel, especially that of one's Father confessor. His part is to make God's call manifestly certain; and he does so largely by negative means. He knows it to be doubtful, if not wholly fanciful, from various reasons. Some of these are feeble health, advanced years, crass stupidity, an incurably violent temper, or plain evidence that the movement is no more than the effervescence of an emotional nature. Or he finds the aspirant to be in the callow state of indeliberate youth. Or, again, he discovers (for the confessor should know the person outside the confessional) him or her to be incurably eccentric. The signal sounded in each of such cases is to slow down; followed often enough by that of a total stop. The spiritual guide knows that it is better for his penitent to weep a few tears of regret for failure to enter the seminary or the novitiate, rather than be allowed to enter and to shed a whole flood of very bitter tears when afterwards dismissed.

The confessor is, furthermore, a painful witness of the divided will of God—as we venture to call it—in certain cases. We mean a true calling interiorly, and a manifest hindrance exteriorly. It may be the ill health of the person, as already noted; it may be that of bounden duty to stay in the world to support parents or other close kindred. In the long run this is no hardship at all, for the noble aspirations God stirs within the heart bear fruit in intention, and finally are rewarded abundantly in Paradise. The hindrances that He places are but the lattices through which He lovingly watches His spouse (Cant. ii. 9). He builds and furnishes and richly endows a cloister in the spirit in all such cases, with, as experience copiously proves, no inferior results of inner and outer virtue. Meanwhile, when vocations are the question, directors are uniformly slow; to settle a vocation by a snap judgment is flying in the face of Providence.

No one in the wide world can have so much to do with the beginnings of a vocation as parents. And their place in this office, so exceedingly honorable, so vastly meritorious, is often taken by a loving sister or brother. A mother's weight of influence, cast into the scales when a soul is balancing whether or not to obey the divine voice, is decisive; and a father's coöperation is generally quite indispensable. These are afterwards well rewarded.

For what spiritual joy can compare with that of parents when, after years of self-forgetful toil, they see their beloved boy offering for the first time the holy sacrifice of the Mass upon their parish altar. And how sweet is the deathbed which is soothed by the ministration of one's own child.

How strange, then, that parents not seldom fail to perceive this their golden opportunity; that they will never say a word of suggestion or encouragement to their devout boy or girl, plainly well fitted for the sanctuary or the convent; that they refuse or half refuse their consent even to the end. We know of one mother who actually followed her daughter to the town in which the novitiate was situated, took rooms in a hotel there, and harried and persecuted her and the sisters incessantly, until she got her child out and carried her away: a mother born and bred a Catholic, in easy circumstances, and with other children and her husband at home.

The very reverse of this, and equally lamentable, is the folly of parents whose tyrannous piety forces their child into the priesthood or a community, a state of life for which he or she has had no calling whatsoever. The giant apostate of that era of apostasy, the French revolution, was Talleyrand, a priest and a bishop, forced into the priesthood by family pressure and for wholly profane purposes.

But all such sacrileges, whether of undue influence for, or cruel resistance to, a vocation, are offset a hundred to one by the coöperation of parents as wise as they are tender-hearted. It very often involves years of self-denial to pay the way of the boy through college, or to give up a girl who is both the joy and the support of a growing family, that she may devote her life exclusively to Jesus Christ and His poor in a religious order. Instances of such sacrifice are, happily, frequently met with.

And now let us return to our first thought, namely, that the state of a Christian is itself a high call to perfection. The vast bulk of our ancestors, the martyrs of the early Church, were men and women whose homes and families were novitiates for the high virtue of martyrdom. There is no condition of existence in which you, my brethren of the laity, will not feel a call from God to do now and then some noble work for Him, and in which littler works of much merit shall not be thrust upon you every hour you exist. Our Lord would have every one of us pray daily for the perfection of heaven itself: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 10). Yea, He promises heaven for a cup of cold water given for His sake to a weary passerby (Matt. x. 42).

And yet it remains true that the call to the altar or the cloister is a vocation to perfection beyond that of ordinary life. One's mental attitude towards divine things, when entering such a state, is exceedingly self-sacrificing, and is often described by the remark: "He has died to the world." Thus to feel is indeed a marvelous grace, later on to be fastened firm by holy orders, by vow and by rule, always favored by the company of men or women similarly under the spell of this life and death influence of holiness. Among the monks of the desert a famous one was named Arsenius, who had been a member of a rich family. Several years after he joined the monks, a messenger came and announced to him that his brother had died and left him heir to a vast property. Arsenius said: "It is impossible. He could not make me his heir, because I died before him when I entered this desert."

II. Bodily Mortification.

"I chastise my body and bring it into subjection."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

Herein is the reason of bodily mortification: the subjection of the body and its appetites and passions to the rule of reason and of grace. The approach of the Lenten season makes this an appropriate topic for our consideration. The relation of mind and body is disturbed by the incessant rebellion of the bodily instincts against good sense, moral right, and the precepts of religion; for ever and always the "flesh lusteth against the spirit" (Gal. v. 17). Hence good Christians practice what is called mortification. They fast and abstain from food till their body feels weakened; they hinder themselves from sleeping too much till their nerves feel distressed; they kneel long and painfully at their prayers. In a word they chastise their body, do violence to it, hold it in suspicion always; and they thus reduce it to subjection. Christians do all this, and therefore as such they take Christ their Redeemer into account, joining their intention to His own, and offering their bodily pains to His Eternal Father in union with His upon Calvary.

It is our duty to watch our lower nature; nor should we wait till temptation comes and finds us off our guard, lest sin should gain entire possession, and reign in our mortal bodies (Rom. vi. 12) unchecked. A true Christian should treat his body almost in the same way as a bad Christian treats his soul, for he takes little or no care of it, grudges it every spiritual necessity, barely recognizes its existence, constantly risks its eternal ruin; whilst on the other hand he furnishes his flesh with abundance and superabundance of everything it craves.

Remember, too, that in religious matters we best root out a vice by practising the opposite virtue. How does a farmer best hinder weeds? First by ploughing them under, but afterwards by planting a useful crop in their stead. So, if one would restrain unchastity he should not only avoid dangerous company and bad reading and plays, but he should also cultivate chaste company. If one would cure intemperance, he should practise total abstinence. If one would quit the dreadful habit of blasphemy, he should often call devoutly on the holy name of Jesus. Here are forms of self-denial which are not only a hindrance of sin, but also a positive profit to the soul.

But the beginnings, the rooting out processes, are always painful. One must not think of being a disciple of Jesus Christ without heeding very practically His injunction: "Calling the multitude together with His disciples, He said to them: If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark viii. 34). You take up the cross of Christ when you practise moderation at table for His sake; when you cut short your evening amusements to make a little visit to the Blessed Sacrament in your church: when you cut down your personal expenses so as to be able to help the poor; when in your family life you, for Christ's sake, yield the place of ease to other members of the family; and when you keep the fasts and abstinences commanded by Holy Church with alacrity and with unfeigned sincerity. In all these ways you "take up" your cross voluntarily, and do not wait till God forces you to suffer mortifications. "Take hold of the cross and do not wait till the cross takes hold of you." These threatening words are St. Philip Neri's in a letter to one of his friends. A voluntary and systematic course of repression of the bodily appetites, reasonable and well advised, is an indispensable part of a really good Christian's life. The alternative is either unbridled license and eternal ruin, or it is a cowardly hanging back till Providence sends such mortifications as sickness, or accidents, or loss of the means of living. For if God does not abandon you wholly to your carnal nature, He will save you by handling you roughly.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

I. St. Paul the Apostle.

This Sunday is chosen by the Church, my brethren, for special commemoration of St. Paul; and in happier times the Supreme Pontiff on this day celebrated holy Mass with marvelous splendor at the Basilica of St. Paul. His conversion, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, is read as the epistle of the Mass, and in the collect his intercession is invoked. These are reasons enough for taking him for our theme. But another reason, and a weighty one, is the vocation of Catholic Americans to convert their country. Bear that in mind while listening to our discourse on the conversion of the Apostle of the nations.

In St. Paul, my brethren, we behold the grace of God energizing an earnest nature; it is the positive and radical character consecrated to the spread of Christ's truth and righteousness. We behold intense conviction and enthusiasm carrying the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth. A character conspicuous for fidelity to conscience pleads with manful candor for faith in Christ on Mars' Hill to the Athenians (Acts xvii. 22), and in Cæsar's palace (Phil. iv. 22) to the masters of the world: Holy Church proclaims him the preacher of the truth to the whole earth. How truly has the man blended with the Apostle. How plainly does Paul the Apostle retain all that is good of the independence of Saul of Tarsus—ever outspoken, ever intrepid. Once it was for error and hate, now it is for truth and love as it is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. i. 14). Had he not been the Hebrew Saul he could not have been the Christian Paul.

But how is a fierce personality changed from wrong to right? Only by trials of humility and obedience divinely administered, and that with an energy proportioned to the person's independence of character. My brethren, this is one of the lessons of St. Paul's conversion. Read again the Epistle of this Sunday, and contrast the fiery zealot "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," and the utterly subjugated creature quivering upon the ground and murmuring, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" Great is the renown of holy obedience, since the foremost preacher of liberty of spirit obeys most submissively at the first instant of his conversion. And he obeys not only the voice of Jesus, but the voice and hand of a fellow-man, even a stranger. Only then does he receive again his bodily sight; and only then is his soul filled with the Holy Ghost.

It is the goad of conscience within, and outward the impact of lawful authority in the house in Damascus, that remove the scales from the eyes of this most positive man in history. It cannot be otherwise with any one of us, whether his nature be forceful or yielding. Once the person of the Teacher is revealed, obedience to Him enters essentially into all our religion. The words of authority may come direct from on high, or they may be spoken by a human intermediary; in either case we give heed to them prompt and perfect, saying with St. Peter: "Who was I that could withstand God?" (Acts xi. 17.) By this alone does real Christian faith possess a soul. Listen to St. Paul's account of his own faith: "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. ii. 20). Yet he who thus speaks of his perfect assimilation of Christ's truth and love had been the foremost blasphemer against Him in the whole world. The change is to be credited to the virtue of obedience.

Saul of Tarsus is vanquished instantly, totally. He is literally laid low by two brief sentences spoken from a vision in the air; flung upon the ground by a flash of light: blinded, trembling, amazed. The hand but now filled with death warrants is empty, and is nervelessly groping in darkness. He is led like a whipped child, this born leader of men; too sick at heart to eat his food; begging feebly for an obedience from those whom he but now threatened to slaughter; glad of the ministry of Ananias, an obscure disciple of Christ. Brethren, let us realize that such must also be our novitiate, each in his place and measure, if we would become proficient in the virtue of faith, capable of enjoying its peace, able to impart it to others—that virtue which Holy Church affirms to be the root and foundation of all holiness.

It is lawful to ask what is the best native material for an exponent of supernatural faith? The answer is, the man who is conscious of an independent personality. Once entirely subjected to divine truth and love, such a spirit employs in their interest a powerful initiative and a steadfast insistence; he has the alpha and omega of zeal. It is to such a one that the Holy Spirit usually gives the stronger interior impulses. The man whose interior witness is strongest is best fitted for the external apostolate; he is the best advocate of the external aids of religion, because he feels them inspiring a mighty interior life. Inspiring indeed; but also adjusting, balancing; now moderating activity, now accelerating it. One who knows equally well the strength of personal graces and the peril of fanaticism is the right apostle, and is the typical Christian.

What is the first question of new-born faith? Is it, Lord, what more wilt Thou have me believe? Not so the faith of St. Paul, but "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" With some natures, to believe is to do. Zeal is the first effect of faith that is apostolic, and all the more if one's nature be an earnest one. Was it not a man of mighty faith and mighty nature who would set out to preach Christ to the whole world on the strength of a private revelation? Yea, for a man who as a Jew had been a zealot for the law (Acts xxii. 3), now to turn and proclaim that no man is saved by the law (Gal. iii. 11), but by faith in Christ Jesus, was a marvelous change indeed. And he confesses to Christ: "When the blood of Stephen Thy witness was shed, I stood by and consented" (Acts xxii. 20). Even as he draws near to his fate, he breathes out fiery threats of vengeance and death against Christ's followers. And then, O mighty love of Jesus! As if a river were suddenly halted in its course, and its waters thrown back and piled up, and then like "a torrent in the south" (Ps. cxxv. 4) a deluge of Christian zeal, blending with it all other holy endowments, natural and supernatural, sweeps Jerusalem from its high place, sweeps pagan idolatry away, and places Christ Crucified in supreme control of mankind.

The zeal of God (Rom. x. 2)—who ever had as great a share of it as our Apostle? But, furthermore, he was an Apostle according to our Lord's tenderness of sympathy for the erring and the guilty. "For out of much affliction," he wrote to the Corinthians, "and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears" (2 Cor. ii. 4). Cardinal Newman believed that St. Paul's most characteristic trait was sympathy. Surely it was, if we look upon it as the painful outcome of his zeal to save men's souls. Consider his pity for his brethren according to the flesh. Writing to the Roman Christians he says vehemently: "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great sadness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ, for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 1-3). Could zeal go farther than to offer to suffer the stigma of apostasy for the sake of the most obdurate race that ever was? And consider how they had treated him. He says in his holy boasting to the Corinthians: "Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned" (2 Cor. xi. 24, 25). And yet his heart was always with them. "Brethren," he writes to his Gentile converts, "the will of my heart indeed, and my prayer to God, is for them [the Jews] unto salvation" (Rom. x. 1).

This greatest conversion of Christian history teaches us never to despair of the conversion of anyone, however furiously prejudiced. And St. Paul's subsequent apostolate heartens us to undertake the conversion of nations the most idolatrous, or the most utterly worldly-minded, even our own nation. It teaches that God demands an active, stirring faith assimilated intimately. And yet He insists on being its "Author and Finisher" (Heb. xii. 2), beginning it and perfecting it by His inner graces and the outward magistracy of His Church—doing so in each one's work and love in His own way and time, often quite out of the way and time we expected, and inspiring our coöperation accordingly.

The true faith is essentially the gospel of peace, but its foremost preacher was a warlike champion, and he is pictured in Christian art bearing a drawn sword. The Prince of Peace is represented by one, who, indeed, is essentially a martyr, but who advances his cause boldly, aggressively. And may we not judge any other spirit to be not so much peaceful as pusillanimous? A true herald of Christ is essentially a zelator. Each of the Apostles was that, but especially our Apostle. Let us give glory to Christ for St. Paul's zeal. It amazed the rulers of the nations, it confounded the Jews; and it has left us in his epistles an immortal literature of love's fire and faith's heroism.

O glorious and magnificent Apostle! True Israelite! The heroic faith of Abraham is in thy blood. The awful majesty of Moses is on thy brow. The fire of Elias burns in thy every word. But in all this and above it all thou bearest the wounds of Jesus in thy body (Gal. vi. 17), and the seal of His love is upon thy soul. His divine word thou wieldest as the Holy Spirit's two-edged sword of truth and of love. Pray for us! Pray for us, O Apostle of the nations, with special fervor, for thy Master has set us apart for the conversion of the greatest nation of the whole world.

II. "A Good and Very Good Heart."

"But that on the good ground, are they who, in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

The seed here meant, my brethren, "is the word of God," as our Savior explains further on in this Gospel. And He has made His Holy Church a very storehouse of the divine seed: God's commandments, the Holy Scriptures, the sacraments, sermons, and instructions and good books, divine counsels and inspirations, good example. To those who live in Catholic surroundings the air is full of seeds of eternal life. Nay, everywhere and all the time, our life is full of them, for God continually plants within our souls holy thoughts of patience in our adversity, of humility in prosperity, of caution in our amusements, and of warnings about our death in the very lapse of time. All these are cast upon our soul as seed is cast upon the soil of a farm: thoughts of eternity and of God, convictions of divine truth, inspirations of grace, and seeds bitter but good of shame for our past sins. All these are living seeds of heavenly plants. It is God's will to have them rooted in us, growing and fructifying. If we but cultivate these seeds, they bring forth fruit of virtue—faith and hope and love and contrition and final perseverance. If we neglect them, they dry up and wither away within us, or they are snatched from out our soul by the envious demons, or they are choked and rotted by the preoccupations and distractions of a worldly career. This is our real life, this welcome reception and good treatment of God's word in our interior life, according to what the Apostle says: "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3).

Our Savior speaks of that soil which is "the good and very good heart." Yes, brethren, we must ask ourselves whether or not we have such a heart for God's seed of immortal glory. How do I receive God's invitations to love Him and keep His commandments? Is it with eagerness or with reluctance? Do I take gladly all He sends me and crave for more? Perhaps I turn from my brave adviser whose name is Fervor, and take counsel with my timid friend that calls itself Prudence. Don't be too literal, he says; go slow; why be a fanatic? you are not a Trappist. No, no. These are not prudent but craven counsels. Let us beg of the Holy Spirit that receptive and yearning mood so needful for "a good and very good heart," according to the prayer of the prophet: "Incline my heart towards Thy testimonies" (Ps. cxviii. 36). Attune my conscience, O God, to catch Thy lightest whisper. Make me feel unhappy when out of Thy reach, and make me feel sweetly at home when Thou art near.

God does His part well. He treats our souls (let us confess it) with abundant and superabundant care in preparation for His word. He gives us sound sense to distinguish between good and evil, and this native gift He elevates by His grace to the company of that divine wisdom which sitteth by His own throne (Wisd. ix. 4). Softening, drawing, alluring, He wins our hearts to admire and then to love a life of virtue. Sometimes He is disappointed in us, and His husbandry is wasted; perhaps it is of your own heart that the words of the prophet were uttered: "He fenced it in and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines; ......and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes" (Isaias v. 2). Angels are driven out and devils are invited in. Poisonous weeds of vice instead of nourishing wheat of virtue is the harvest. O my brethren, what should be our prayer, but that God would return to His farm and cleanse it of weeds, possess it wholly, and should say to us: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in the midst of you; and I will cause you to walk in my commandments" (Ezech. xxxvi. 26, 27).

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

I. Self-Denial.

"And after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

THE season of Lent is at hand, my brethren; and Holy Church forecasts its penitential spirit and practices by giving us our Savior's prophecy of His approaching Passion and Crucifixion. In His spirit we shall go through its six weeks of pain and of sorrow, and all our conduct will be tinged with the sadness which overcast His soul as He effected our redemption.

The Dominican Saint, Blessed Henry Suso, was once almost beside himself with mental distress, caused by his excessive mortifications. He says that "he was so overcome with agony that he could no more contain himself," and bursting into a flood of bitter tears, he exclaimed: "O God, Thou alone knowest what sorrow and anguish of heart are." A very instructive teaching. God our Savior alone fathomed the depths of human sorrow.

Holy Church bids us take Him for our model during our little self-denials. Lent is a time set apart for penance. Each of you—such is our sure trust—will make a deeply contrite confession, followed by a very fervent communion, our Lord's Passion and Death being the inspiration of your preparation. You will attend the parish Lenten devotions, both the sermons and the stations of the cross. Some will make frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Many, let us hope, will manage to hear holy Mass daily. Would that each of you bore in mind the exhortation of Pius X., that when any Catholic hears Mass, and is free from mortal sin, he is entitled to receive Holy Communion. We shall all of us, please God, have a decided increase of Christian fervor. But it must be all in a penitential mood. Many times these words of the prophet are chanted in the public services of religion during the coming weeks: "Be ye converted to Me with your whole heart in fasting and in weeping" (Joel ii. 12).

Bodily mortification, when done in obedience to the precepts of the Church, or even when, under wise guidance, it is self-inflicted, atones for sins, and represses and weakens those carnal tendencies which cause our sins, and are the perpetual enemies of the Christian's good estate; it clears the air and admits the sunlight of grace into the soul, signalizing and making plain the inspirations of the Holy Spirit; it spiritualizes our whole nature—all according to the words of the preface of the Mass in Lent: "Thou, O almighty and eternal God, by bodily fasting restrainest vices, upliftest our minds, and grantest strength and rewards, through Christ our Lord." Some would lay little weight on this means of salvation, leaning heavily, perhaps all too heavily, upon the possession of integral faith in Christ and in His Church. But the Apostle admonishes them very earnestly: "For unto you it is given for Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him" (Phil. i. 29). How painful a destiny, and also how lofty a one, thus to test our faith in Christ by bearing the Cross of Christ.

And in everything, we repeat, our Lord's sufferings, offered to His Father as payment of our awful debt of sinfulness, should be our model. Some of us dread the coming of Lent. But for a man to abhor suffering is only the debtor's aversion to pay his debts. No debt ever was so justly due as pain is due to God, pain and death. It is a comfort that suffering is the proper as well as the acceptable recompense for our sins, because all can suffer and all must suffer. Pain is pure gold: only stamp it with the right motive and your eternal debt is paid. How precious is holy Mass, since it glorifies pain, does so every day, glorifies it by commemorating the divine pain of our Redeemer's death. As a thirsty man drinks of a spring, so do we drink in the love of suffering at holy Mass.

Such has ever been the feeling of the Saints. Take an illustration from the Middle Ages. St. Stephen Grandmont founded an austere community near Limoges in France in the twelfth century. Two legates of the Pope, journeying to the King of France and hearing of them, went out of their way to make them a visit. They were much edified. They asked Stephen: "Are you Canons Regular?" He said: "No." "Are you monks?" "No," he again answered. "Are you hermits?" "No; we are sinners doing penance." St. Stephen and his associates were none the less monks, also hermits, combining both vocations in one. But the all-essential vocation of penance for sin fixed their attention to the exclusion of every other.

Meantime our Lenten pains do more than pay our debt to God. They also purge out the inborn evil of our nature. This course of religious sorrow is medicinal. It is wringing out the proud blood from our wounded heart, as the prophet boasts: "I humbled my soul in fasting" (Ps. xxxiv. 13). The proud demon is expelled by Lenten austerities, a kind that is "not cast out," says our Lord, "but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. xvii. 20). Unchastity and tendency to excessive drink, hatred, and envy, ignoble sloth about duties to God and man, these and all other kinds of wickedness are banished by a Lent honestly observed. St. Thomas Aquinas was once tempted by a foul woman, who had gained entrance to his private room. Instantly he snatched a burning brand from the fire on the hearth, and with it he drove the tempter headlong out of the house. Brethren, no harlot is so rank a temptation as our own treacherous thoughts, and no firebrand is more efficacious against them than bodily pain suffered in union with the Crucified, such as an empty stomach and feeble limbs resulting from fasting.

Fasting is appropriate mortification of the holy season. We bid you prepare to do some fasting. If some of you are dispensed from the law, remember that none of you are dispensed from the spirit of the law of fasting. Restraint at table, as far, at least, as superfluities go, is still your bounden duty. The practice of fasting seems to be going quite out and away from Christian life; but let us fight for what is left of it. Let us ask no dispensations except by real compulsion of ill-health or excessive labor. Dispensation or no dispensation, let us cherish a few little relics of the antique austerity of our ancestors. Other bodily restraints should also be zealously practised. Sleep may be curtailed—go to bed early in Lent for the love of God, and get out of bed in time to hear Mass, or at least to stop a few moments in Church on your way to work. Cut down bodily comforts of every kind, and avoid ostentation in dress (a vulgarity under any circumstances), as something glaringly offensive to Him Who said of Himself by His prophet: "They parted My garments amongst them; and upon my vesture they cast lots" (Ps. xxi. 19).

All this restraint of bodily ease and comfort is simply essential for our spiritual welfare. St. Teresa voices the experience of all ages: "Whosoever begins to concern himself about the needs of his body, will soon forget the needs of his soul" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, ch. xxxiv., 3). Yea, and he will soon forget his true relation to Christ, forget it and lose it. A curious thing to many is the Christian view about loss and gain. St. Paul expresses it: "I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord;

for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ;...... that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death" (Phil. iii. 8-10). Lost to the Apostle were all earthly things, lost and despised as something filthy. Gained was the excellent knowledge of Jesus, felt in the joy of love's fellowship amid sufferings innumerable, and finally consummated in a glorious martyrdom. He as an Apostle, I, as a poor little disciple, can have but one and the same estimate of loss and gain for time and eternity.

No man worthy the name but wages war against his body. He *must* fight it, for it "lusts against the spirit" (Gal. v. 17), as every rational man knows. It lusts for more leisure than is right, for softer beds and longer sleep, for gross feeding and heavy drinking. Pamper your body and you cherish a viper in your bosom. Pamper your body—but after the catastrophe, which is sure to follow, do not complain and say, "I couldn't help it." All instructed Catholics know this truth which worldlings deny. Worldlings often make Lent a time not of penance, but of license. The world, whose wisdom is a congeries of the maxims of unholy joy, what good will it be to you when it leaves you at the grave? The Emperor Charles V. ruled half of Europe, and towards the end of his life he quit his throne and shut himself up in a monastery to do penance; and he died there. St. Francis Borgia, who had moved him to this wisest act of his reign, preached his funeral sermon, and said of him: "The Emperor forsook the world before it forsook him." Tell me what man the world will not forsake, since every man must die? Why should you cling to one who is a traitor to the core?

Finally, my brethren, our interior relationship to God should be strengthened and brightened during Lent by an increase of love—love gradually overcoming fear as the dominant force within our thoughts. All penitential exercises, even though they begin with fear of God, should during the approaching season of Lent be developed into love, as is natural when we are exercised in thoughts of our Savior's Passion and Death; for "He loved me, and He delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

II. Total Abstinence.

"Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst" (John xix. 28).

My brethren, the holy season of Lent is at hand. And you are aware that our Holy Father, the Pope, has suggested that those who cannot observe the Lenten fast should commute it by total abstinence from intoxicating drink. Bear with us while we speak of the advantages of this practice, especially when our intention is imitation of and sympathy for our Savior's thirst in His last agony on the cross, a practice which the same pontiff has enriched with a plenary indulgence.

There is, indeed, a purely human side to total abstinence; and it is worthy of one's thoughts if only as preliminary to the religious side. When one stops drinking he saves his nickels, and whoever saves nickels saves dollars. In order to accumulate anything for a rainy day, one must practise economy. Now, if one has been spending two or three nickels a day on drink and then stops drinking, at the end of the year he will have saved from fifty to sixty dollars.

But the greatest motive is the religious one. And this belongs to us Catholics by a special right. The spiritual and religious reasons why we abstain are the ones that hold us most firmly and give us the greatest comfort. We have a tender spot in our hearts for those who are addicted to excessive drink, and for their wives and the little ones. And this sentiment I claim to be not only our motive, but also our special grace. If you bear this in mind, you will understand how it is that, without any spiritual pride, without the least degree of vainglory, we teetotalers can claim a place in the Church. We have been accused over and over again of the "holier-than-thou" sin, that of setting ourselves up over others, of strutting around as better Christians than our neighbors—in fact, of being Pharisees. But this is a libel.

We have a deadly abhorrence of the vice of intemperance. God gives us grace to see its evils clearly. Remembering how great is the dignity of the human soul, we are filled with horror at its destruction by intemperance; and this sentiment is born of the grace of God.

That is why you find total abstainers, priests and laymen, so aggressive against what causes the sin of intemperance. It is not because we are puritanical and inquisitorial. It is because God has inspired us with hatred of this fearful vice. This, again, is why we regret to see the bottle passed around the family table, and dislike to see occasions in family life celebrated by drinking—such as the marriage, the christening and the wake. In a word we wish our people would put a stop to convivial drinking. We know that conviviality breeds excess, that many drunkards are made by miscalled hospitality, by over good nature, by treating, and by crowding danger upon the foolish and unwary.

This also explains our opposition to saloons. Sometimes we are accused of being fanatics because we undertake to talk the saloons down; because we endeavor to have the law enforced against them. As to the Catholicity of our conduct we are safe enough, for we but follow the admonitions of Holy Church promulgated by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. The reason we do this is not because we claim to be better Catholics than others, nor because we have one set of principles and they another. It is because we know the saloon to be the place where excessive drinking is commonly done. There it is that nearly all the drunkenness is committed. If, by exception, one learns to drink too much at home, he yet carries on his intemperance in the saloon. We know perfectly well where men get drunk. It is a plain case. Men do not get drunk down in the caves of the earth. They walk into the saloon, and drink there until they are drunk; or at least they are drunk by the time they get home. It is in the saloon that the sin of drunkenness is committed.

All of our young men may be considered in danger of excessive drinking. Not that all may become drunkards, but so many of them are likely to become more or less affected by this vice, that we must labor with all of them to keep them out of saloons and cause them to give up drinking. To succeed in this we must be in a position to command their respect. When a man comes to me and does nothing more than say good words—well, he is entitled to have his words heard; but when he backs them up by deeds, he has strong credentials, and cannot easily be resisted. When one is beginning to frequent saloons, and is arrested in his course by another, who says: Friend, stop that, and do as I do, take the pledge; I am no better, no worse than you, but I am safe on that score, and I should like to make you so—he has found a good friend. We seek to influence our neighbor by example, just as the mother takes a sip of the medicine herself in order that the child may do so by imitation. You cannot deter the mother by telling her she does not need the medicine. Her child's needs are her own. So with us.

What need had our Lord to suffer thirst in His dying hour? No other need than His compassion for sinners, and especially for inebriates. Can we do better than join Him in this heroic act of charity?

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

I. Temptations.

"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

The Holy Ghost placed our Lord in the arena as our Champion. And it was a particular goodness in Him, that He would be not only our champion, but also our companion in temptation, for it is an ordeal excessively shameful to a sensitive conscience. But He full well knew that it is excessively perilous to a dull conscience; and it is a trial that all must undergo. One man says: I am too busy to be tempted. Agreed, if prayer is your business; though even in prayer one is not quite exempt. Other occupations, one and all, are easily hindrances to us in our conflict.

Foremost among our temptations are the exhalations and the oozings of our lower nature, called by the Apostle "the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes." These come first in order among our miseries. But next to the sting of the flesh, the worst evil of life is the encumbrance of self-interest, which the Apostle in the same text calls the world's "pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). Thoughtful of God and vigilant of one's surroundings—here is the mind and the hand that either wards off or shakes off temptation of any kind whatsoever. Among the hermits, the Abbot Isaac said that not only does God follow up temptations by the bestowal of favors, but He goes beforehand with abundant graces to enable us to reject them. The sage admonishes us: "Let thy eyes look straight on, and let thy eyelids go before thy steps. Make straight the paths of thy feet" (Prov. iv. 25, 26). Straight onward to God; eyes and hands and feet straight forward to God; heart and soul fixed unalterably on God. Herein a prayerful habit is rightly known. It is not a mopish refuge from the work of life, but the right hand of the courageous champion of the Lord.

For those who have made some progress in religion, St. Teresa's prayer is appropriate: "Give us, O our good Master, some safeguard against surprise in this most dangerous warfare" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, ch. xl., 1). Watch! How many times does that same good Master utter that cry, Watch and pray! When the American colonists were getting together to resist the tyranny of George III., their armies, destined to be invincible, were but impromptu companies of farmers. But they called themselves Minute Men: between the first alarm and the onset of battle one minute was allowed and no more. Now we are all minute men in our warfare against our hellish foes, and our weapons are placed not so much beside our beds at night and in reach of our work in the daytime, as they are set out in our very hearts, which are armories of prayer.

When temptation begins a little prayer will expel it; just as a pint of water will put out a flame that later on cannot be quenched by twenty fire engines: time is every thing in fighting fire. "If thou spit upon the spark," says the Wise Man, "it shall be quenched" (Ecclus. xxviii. 14)—a little prayer and a quick retreat from danger. It is often but a little spot that tells the danger of a mortal disease; and sometimes the venom of it is hardly perceptible at all. Little acts of kindness are rewarded with heaven; and yet sometimes little kindnesses between persons of different sexes are a snare, unless rigid self-mastery tempers every lightest act, and prayer disciplines one's very glances and gestures, most of all one's thoughts. After the catastrophe it is vain to say, I couldn't help it. For the sin was rather in the criminal self-trust of the first steps than in the final surrender to the enemy.

Another help is restraint of bodily comfort. Nor is this a help against sensual temptations only, for weakening of bodily force for love of Jesus Crucified reduces pride of heart also. In the lives of the Fathers of the Desert it is related of the Abbot Macarius that he was once sorely tempted by a restless demon to quit his solitude, and go to Rome and serve the sick in the hospitals. Detecting in this the taint of vainglory, the Saint prayed hard against it. When it yet continued he filled two great baskets with sand, strapped them to his shoulders, and journeyed thus through the wilderness. He met a friend who begged to relieve him, and was refused; and then he said: "What does this mean?" Macarius answered: "I am tormenting my tormentor." When he got back to his cell in the evening he was utterly exhausted in body, but his soul was wholly freed from the temptation. The attack of some devils can only be overcome by the counter attack of two faithful allies—according to our Savior: "This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting" (Mark ix. 28). My brethren, this should have some bearing on your asking to be dispensed from the fast of Lent.

Our Champion and our Hero was led into temptation by the Spirit of God, whereas He bids us pray daily: "Lead us not into temptation" (Luke xi. 4). But there is no contradiction here, for He is the Son of God and we are "children of wrath" (Eph. ii. 3). His the victory by seeking the conflict and ours by avoiding it. The bravery of the warrior for Him, but the caution of the weakling for us. Is it not true that for some men safely passing by a saloon door is a magnificent victory, and one eloquent of great moral strength? Jesus is honored by that warfare of weaklings in which the plan of campaign is wholly the strategy of retreat—even how to surrender the city in order to save the citadel. Joseph, the son of Israel, was solicited by his master's wife to do a foul deed, and his tempter so urged him that she caught hold of his coat. "But he, leaving the garment in her hand, fled, and went out" (Gen. xxxix. 12). O how blessed a loss and how daring a cowardice! And how happy is he who thus wears all his treasures, yea and his body's very life, unclasped and loosened that he may slip them loose in an instant and save his immortal soul by giving them up.

Such temptations as to blaspheme God in time of trouble, or inwardly to deny the faith, are impulses injected from hell into our thoughts. They frighten us; yet they need not demoralize us. The very fact that they are a terror to us should reassure us, eliciting as they do an explicit renewal of our loyalty to our heavenly Father. In such an emergency, "All my bones shall say: Who is like unto God?" (Ps. xxxiv. 10.) One trait of this kind of trial is the incessant recurrence of the evil tendency—the unbidden sounding of blasphemous words in the soul, the unwelcome utterance of rank heresy. In such cases no parleying is permitted—it is all a form of pride, to be cured instantly and humbly by an act of love of God or of faith in His Church. Meet the demon as incessantly as he assaults you, meet him by defiance, point blank and without offering reasons why: defiance and contempt. The devil himself is not to be feared, but only the burning gulf into which he would entice us. "Have courage," writes St. Francis de Sales to one of his penitents, "and laugh at the author of these evil suggestions, and spit in his face" (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 155). Never forget that your guardian angel is with you, your friend most constant and true.

St. Vincent de Paul early in his career agonized for months under an awful spell of temptation to apostasy, the evil one seeming to have half-possessed his innermost faculties. The Saint wrote out an Act of Faith, signed it, and sewed it into his clothes next his heart. As he felt the terrible allurement rising within him, he pressed his hand upon this sign manual of his loyalty to God, and then he felt a temporary relief. Finally heaven inspired him with a complete remedy. It was a fervent promise to Jesus Christ that if He would release him from the devil's persecution, he would devote his entire life to the care of the poor. Under the stress of temptation we must realize that we are fighting for God, Who is concerned with our victory more than we are ourselves. The good King Josaphat was dismayed at the multitudes of Ammon and of Moab arrayed against him. And God sent a prophet who said to him: "Fear ye not, and be not dismayed at this multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Par. xx. 15).

Along with prayer we are counselled to use the relics of God's Saints for routing the demon, or to recite aloud certain passages of holy Scripture, as our Savior did in the desert. And both the Church's counsel and our own experience prove the good of using holy water, the crucifix, and devout pictures. Only fair-weather Christians make light of such simple expedients. But their benefit is well known to those whose religious life is more experimental. These accept the Church's injunctions with faith, and their own experience soon demonstrates her wisdom. We need hardly recommend our Blessed Lady's intercession, for it is the well-proven help of all the tempted, but especially when one is fighting for the holy virtue of purity.

The malice of the demon here and there wins victims. But most of these, let us hope, are afterwards rescued from his clutches, whilst in the vast multitude of cases his temptations serve but to strengthen faith and love in our hearts, just as the stormy winds deepen the roots and toughen the fibre of a tree growing in the open. "What doth he know who hath not been tried?" exclaims the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxxiv. 9).

We have seen a great rock on a mountain side so nicely balanced that a child can move it back and forth for the space of a few inches, but only to that extent, for its immense weight is firmly fixed to its base. So with the true Christian. He is moved by all that allures the senses and beguiles the heart—moved, but only a little and for a brief moment. His foundation is in "the everlasting hills" (Ps. lxxvi. 5) of the divine love, and no earthquake can stir him from his steadfastness to God.

Let us say in conclusion that our Savior's provision of trust and confidence given in the Sacrament of Penance is never better appreciated than by a soul deeply, terribly tempted. He knows that all temptations against faith, or chastity, or God's goodness are instantly weakened, and for the time at least are generally quite expelled by being revealed in confession. He knows, too, that among the other graces of sacramental absolution, light and strength are given for the renewal of the conflict, in case the enemy returns to plague us.

II. The Good Peaceable Man.

"Giving no offense to any man."—*From this Day's Epistle.*

These words of the Apostle, given us by Holy Church to meditate upon as we cross the threshold of Lent, describe a good, peaceable man. A true Christian loves peace in his family in his circle of friends, loves it in his conversation better than smart talk. "Charity," says the same Apostle, "is patient, is kind;......is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil......hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 4-7).

This, of course, involves no small interior conflict, for most of us have a hard struggle to keep down a fault-finding tendency. Saints must be forced to assume the office of judge; but we sinners are always over-eager to sit in judgment upon others. A good, peaceable man has no blind antipathies. He is easily pleased; likes to make others happy; leans towards mercy; must be dragged away from doing good; and during conversation constantly excuses the absent and strives to please the present.

He has studied the lesson of the Wise Man: "Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbor" (Ecclus. xxviii. 8). His kindness to men is due to his fear and love of God. The teaching of our Lord about doing favors has sunk deep into his soul, sweetening the innermost springs of action: "It is a more blessed thing to give, rather than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). So blessed is this heavenly tendency to prefer giving favors to claiming one's rights, that our Lord ranks it among the great Beatitudes or capital virtues of His religion: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. v. 9).

The *Imitation of Christ* says that "A good peaceable man turns all things to good." Slanderous talk at his table draws from him a kindly word of defence of the absent. A bitter taunt against himself, offers him an opportunity of forgiving an injury, and winning a firmer grasp of friendship upon an irascible companion. A peacemaker—he had rather make peace in a little family circle than conquer a great city. To him the victories of peace are more renowned than those of war. Some men bubble over with sarcasm, and snatch every occasion to raise a laugh at the expense of others—their sense of humor is a cruel pest. Our kindly man overflows with words that are like our Savior's: "He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm" (Matt. viii. 26). The presence of a peaceable Christian is a soothing, quieting, calming influence upon the stormy waters of conversation.

But we must not think that our good, peaceable man is goody-goody. He is a man of character and decision, has opinions of his own and thinks for himself. But he holds that charity outranks all other virtues. It often costs him a hard interior struggle to yield to others what is his own right, yet he constantly does so for peace' sake, and for God's sake. He is a real hero, this soldier of peace, a character both strong and gentle. His habit of mind has grown to be the worship of peace, and of mutual affection for the sake of the Prince of Peace. Pray to obtain this grace, my brethren, so close in kinship with all "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17).

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

I. "The Charity of Christ Urgeth Us."

"And the disciples hearing, fell on their faces, and feared greatly. And Jesus came, and touched them, and said to them: Arise and fear not."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Doubtless, my brethren, the voice of the Eternal Father commanding the three Apostles to hear and heed His Divine Son was a terrible sound; it overpowered them with holy fear. But in place of that fear our Savior would substitute love, loving confidence. Let us compare the two sentiments together, and we shall find that if fear has its uses, they are secondary to love, and are introductory to it. But we do not mean to consider human fear, a feeling characteristic of tepid Christians. The vast majority of men are afraid of following Jesus Christ, with their whole heart, from base motives. Without realizing it, they live upon spiritual compromises, adjustments, as bankrupt traders compound with their creditors. They are always answering the demands of conscience by the maxims of human fear, saying: "You ask too much; you are too hard on me; I am doing the best I can." No, we are not considering the expedients of cowards for slipping back from the firing line of our holy warfare, but rather that amazement which fills courageous souls at the thought of God's sovereign majesty and infinite holiness in contrast with their own misery. Of this sentiment, wise in itself and in its place, Job tells us when he writes that God "said to man: Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding" (Job xxviii. 28). A ship is made to sail; but an anchor is given her to prevent her sailing to her destruction. So does our heart sail onward, wafted, indeed, by the breath of love; but it is now and again kept still and patient by the anchor of holy fear, for danger is close at hand.

Much, indeed, that is said of fear may be said also of holy humility, which is a low rating of self and a high rating of God—surely a sound view of things, a perfect form of the argument by contrast. It is expressed by the prophet: "All my bones shall say: Who is like unto God?" (Ps. xxxiv. 10.) This fear in the bones is a trait of saintliness. When St. Aloysius was at last allowed to leave his princely home and go to the Jesuit novitiate, his servants and attendants were heartbroken and bathed in tears. As the young man bade them farewell, he exhorted them to keep God's commandments, and he added: "In going to the novitiate, I seek nothing but the salvation of my soul." Aloysius was already one of God's heroes; but he feared to lose his soul if he tarried in the world. To a true Christian the fear of eternal loss is but another name for the resolve of highest perfection. It is nothing else than a fearful appreciation of eternity, and a lively appreciation of the nothingness of temporal things, except as they may minister to the divine glory.

Of this fear we can speak with gladness; as King David bids us: "Rejoice unto the Lord with trembling" (Ps. ii. 11)—or otherwise: tremble unto the Lord with joy. Who can love God without loving infinite justice?—loving, that is to say, what is necessarily to be also feared. Many a holy soul loves God intensely, but with an exquisite pain of fear. Nothing is commoner than the even progress of fear with love in devout souls;

each step is a new joy of love with a new pain of fear, deeper pain and deeper love, until "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 18)—that is to say, in Paradise, and not before. When one can say truly, "I could not fear God more perfectly than I now do," love begins its more perfect work. The last of perfect fear is not far from the first of perfect love. The fear for his salvation which drove St. Aloysius from royal luxury to the poverty of his novitiate, was present with another Jesuit Saint, the Venerable Paul Segneri, on the threshold of heaven. He had been a mighty missionary his whole life long, and yet when he was bid to prepare for death, he asked for pen and paper, and wrote the following: "Formula to be used to notify Father Segneri that he is about to die: Rejoice and be glad, Father, for the hour is come when thou wilt no longer offend God."

But the Apostles' fear at the Transfiguration was not this kind; it was a frenzied fear, and our Savior would make it a loving fear. His Wise Man calls that sentiment "the beginning of Wisdom" (Prov. i. 7). Wisdom is love, its apprenticeship is fear. To the nobler kind of souls a divine fear is granted, as it is said of Jesus in the garden: "He began to fear and to be heavy" (Mark xiv. 33). Thus the more ardently a perfect man loves God, the darker are his intervals of fear; and the more fervently he thanks God later on for the fear he endured. But it was a means to the end, and not the end itself. It is just as the baby's skin is toughened and the muscles gradually enlarged by the infantile blood, but not without growing pains, nor without much bodily stress and fatigue. As the mother's milk lingers in the veins of the octogenarian, so does fear linger in the maturest love of the saint. Who can love God in this scene of risk and conflict without dreading some unknown catastrophe which shall deprive him of that love?

Salt preserves meat, or, as it is said, "cures" it, from the Latin word which means to care for something. So salt cures meat with its bitterness; and that is how fear will cause you to keep your good resolutions. But sugar also cures meat with its sweetness, and that is how love acts on you, for it sweetens your good purposes, and makes it easier for you to carry them out. But the best cured meat is preserved by both sugar and salt; and thus it is that both love and fear care for our future happy death. What is so cautious as love whilst it is seeking the Beloved? What so vigilant to hold Him fast when He is found? "I found Him Whom my soul loveth," exclaims the bride in the Canticles; "I held Him, and I will not let Him go" (Cant. iii. 4). Now the caution and the vigilance that are such needful ingredients of love are but other names for holy fear.

Fear, therefore, is good, is necessary. Yet the Lord says to the disciples: "Fear not." This is because their fear was excessive, and also because it is outranked by love. Fear is not the frame of mind most pleasing to God, nor most honorable to ourselves. The mind and heart of man are made for love and for joy, and God is God, and lives and reigns because He is by His very essence love and joy, "For God is love" (1 John iv. 8). Love is the essence of every virtue, its motive, end, reward. Therefore every act of any other virtue should show plain sign of love's presence—indeed the supreme test of its being a virtue is that it can readily be changed into a pure act of love. This is a very necessary truth for despondent natures; and hardly less so for the more vigorous natures. Let it be the energy of love that inspires your zeal and fortitude, and not the violence of self-will.

Serving God from fear alone is always wearisome. Religion should not reduce us to penal servitude. Whilst a soul is terrorized it can hardly be sanctified. Our fears should be used in order to put the constraint of love upon us, according to St. Paul: "The charity of Christ urgeth us" (2 Cor. v. 14). Persuasion to a sinless life is at its best when love is the advocate: persuasion, attraction, inspiration, these are the forces God's love employs to form religion, especially contrition in men's souls. And are they not resistless to a true soul? While one is influenced by fear of God, he should be looking forward to the love of God. Soon the penitent sinner is dominated by love of his crucified Savior, and his sorrow for sin is as deep as his heart is capable of. Meanwhile fear of God's punishments is reserved for emergencies. Fear is of special worth when one becomes conscious of the perilous uprisings of corrupt nature, or of sullen feelings of pride. The animal in our nature must be scourged by the thought of hell. But even then the love of Jesus Crucified is near by. Gentler and nobler motives are never far off. No one dreads mortal sin rightly till he loves our Lord Jesus Christ ardently. It is that love alone which rightly reveals to him his baseness, and gives him a sharp pain of heart. A man once told me that he wanted to go to confession because his "conscience was afflicted." He was miserable because he recalled our Savior's sufferings for his sake. Could he feel thus afflicted without a strong admixture of love?

It was love that reigned supreme in the heart of St. Francis Xavier, whose prayer of love is thus translated into our language.

My God! I love Thee, not to gain
The bliss of Thy eternal reign,
Nor to escape the fiery lot
Reserved for those that love Thee not.
  Thou, Thou, my Jesu, on the Tree
  Didst in Thine arms encompass me.

Thou didst endure the Nails, the Lance,
Disgraces manifold, the Trance
Of Bloody Sweat, the boundless Seas
Of Bitterness and Anguishes;
Nay, even Death's last Agony;
And this for me—for sinful me!
  Most loving Jesu, shall this move
  No like return of Love for Love?

Above all things I love Thee best,
Yet not with Thought of Interest,
Not thus to win Thy promised Land,
Not thus to ward Thy threatening Hand;
But as Thou lov'st me, so do I
Love, and shall ever love—and why?
  Because Thou art my God and King,
  The Source and End of Everything.

II. Excessive Fear.

"And Jesus came, and touched them, and said to them: Arise, and fear not."—*From this Day's Gospel.*

Our Lord chided His Apostles for being afraid; this was because theirs was an excessive fear. A calm and well-grounded fear is like the first deposit of a rich man in the bank—the beginning of a great fortune. Who has not heard the proverb of the Wise Man: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. i. 7). But this is not the speechless fear of these panic-stricken Apostles, nor the nervous dread of a scrupulous soul, nor the despairing fear of a reprobate. Christian fear, says St. Francis de Sales, is more distressed about the danger of losing God's love than the risk of going to hell.

But, my brethren, too many good Christians allow their fears to overshadow their hopes; we hear persons of ripened virtue doubting of their eternal salvation, and they think that timid state of mind to be pleasing to God. Not so; for our fear should principally be concerned with our own weakness, and should be joined to a feeling of confidence in God's strength. Love and love alone is the virtue that crowns our efforts as well as sanctifies them, even though we must work out our "salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii. 12). For St. Paul admonishes us: "You have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons whereby we cry: Abba (Father)" (Rom. viii. 15).

Brethren, upon a reasonable and religious fear of God, a tender grace of love descends by an eternal predestination. Says St. Chrysostom: "He who fears God has indeed an iron chain about his neck; but as he learns to love God, these fetters are found gradually changing into a golden necklace."

The three Apostles were not to blame for being afraid, for who could gaze unappalled at the majestic splendor of the transfigured Jesus; who could help being amazed and confounded at the divine words, loud and stern and peremptory: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased—hear ye Him." But their fear was excessive, and the stupor of this awesome feeling was not to last. Jesus was soon done with Moses and Elias, and now He is with the Apostles again, His dear, blessed, familiar self, to be much feared indeed, but much more to be loved.

The ordinary, everyday spirit of dealing with God is fear held in the background, and love free and at home as in our Father's house. Therefore Tertullian says: "How can one love without fearing that he shall cease to love?" If love dominates your life, then fear holds its proper place, namely, that of love's servant. Meantime St. John teaches that "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 18). But that is a condition of blessedness reserved for heaven, where fear is but a sweet memory of dangers passed and gone forever. Meantime in all your sad musings over your sins, in all your forebodings of future dangers, bear in mind that your all-powerful Friend and Redeemer says to you: "Arise, and fear not."

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

I. Venial Sins.

"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

THESE words, my brethren, are a condemnation of that unholy neutrality by which a half-hearted Christian would keep his place among our Lord's followers without being quite separated from His enemies. Our Master unveiled their interior disposition in His revelation to St. John. Addressing the Bishop of Laodicea, He says: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold, nor hot. I would that thou wert cold, or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth" (Apoc. iii. 15, 16). From this description spiritual writers are led to call them the lukewarm, and their vice tepidity. It means committing venial sins deliberately, readily, and frequently whilst contriving to refrain from mortal sins.

The state of tepidity, then, is the borderland between love and hate. It is, however, more than a condition of repeated venial offences. For we are liable to imperfections and petty transgressions from our inborn weakness; and sometimes we are caught unawares and slip down of a sudden. In such cases—and a fervent friend of God may often be thus placed—we quickly recover our footing and go on again, humbled, indeed, but not discouraged. Tepidity, however, is different. St. Francis de Sales shows the difference: "Surely it is one thing to tell a lie now and then in matters of small importance, and another to take pleasure in lying and retain an affection for the practice" (*Devout Life,* Part I., ch. xxii.). This spiritual demoralization is shown by harboring ill-feeling, not seldom towards near relatives; by taking pleasure in family gossip perpetually renewed; by the constant habit of making bitter taunts and reproaches. Yet persons so disposed still undertake to cling to the gentle and all-loving Savior. They vaunt their purity to Him, perhaps, and revel in their hatefulness. They scatter with Satan, and yet would gather with Christ.

It is sometimes a hard question as to whether or not such a one is in mortal sin. The state of mortal sin in that soul is perhaps beyond the ken of its victim; but he knows full well that he reeks with serious daily offences of a quality which, if not deadly by theory, are yet exceedingly injurious to religious vitality of spirit. A man may never be technically drunk, and yet, as doctors insist, he may be so often not quite sober as to be liable even to delirium tremens. We read of rich men wholly immune from legal penalties, whose wealth was notoriously acquired by sharp practices: they are not thievish enough for the state's prison nor honest enough to be trustworthy.

The San José scale is a parasite of the orange—it does not prevent the fruit from being edible, but it prevents it from being marketable. So is a tepid soul an unpresentable and a disgraceful Christian. His sloth does not keep him away from Mass on Sundays, but he is always late, and at the close he is the first to slip out of church—a shabby Christian, a dull-spirited creature; in a word, a lukewarm friend of Him Who being God took the form of a servant for our sakes, and was true to us "unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). This sort of life is like a house made of green lumber with the bark left on; the building is clumsy and every joint is rickety. Virtue is not so much practised by a tepid Christian as it is tolerated. Every motive of good conduct is the lowest possible.

In the journey of life such a wayfarer turns out of the road to avoid duty, and loiters and dallies to enjoy every relaxation. His aim is never entire obedience to conscience, but rather a straining for mitigations and palliations and excuses and dispensations. In confession these are not so much penitents as they are disputants—casuists with a vengeance! Having easily and habitually deprived the Lord, Who died for them, of their heart's full loyalty, they will fight like a tiger against a Father confessor who would hinder them of the occasions of sin, such as convivial drinking, or a kind of reading that feeds an unclean curiosity, or a companionship that borders on lust. It is not exactly God's friendship they want, but God's external rite of absolution. They love virtue about as much as a "decent" saloon keeper loves temperance: certain things are to be done and certain others avoided, because otherwise one's standing as a member of the Church is imperilled.

By paying down a large sum of money I can purchase a respectable annuity. So (a tepid Catholic says) by the heavy expenditure of shame at my Easter and Christmas confession, I can purchase the privilege of currently misbehaving within the limits of a paltry decency. Some virtue I practise, but my heart is not in it. If it were, my purpose would be to do God's will and that alone, in general and particular, and sincerely to lament my shortcomings. I would go to confession, not to argue for their continuance, but to provide courageously for keeping them down to the minimum possible to my frail nature. It is vain to serve God and my own self-indulgence, my own quarrelsomeness, my own trickiness. The veil of the ancient ark of the covenant was twice dyed (Exod. xxvi. 31), and all my motives must be doubly saturated with God, His might and His wisdom and His love, if I shall hope to rank squarely with His friends.

Scripture warns us: "Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart" (1 Kings xvi. 7). It is in this that God's judgment differs from man's; God reads our motives. Would that we might make clean cut decisions about the relation of conduct to motive. Let us feel safe, not because we are barely on the hither side of the dead line, but because we are close in to God, because we hold fast to God in our standards of right and wrong. By quietly, but energetically setting aside motives that are self-centred, or are the dictates of human respect, vainglory or the pleasures of the senses—by persevering in this spirit one finally arrives at something like a complete reparation of the corruption of nature. It is by detecting and expelling low motives and substituting nobler ones that our primal bent towards evil is corrected, a virtuous life is made attractive, the work of grace is unimpeded, and final perseverance is achieved. Constantly thus to "think of God in goodness, and seek Him in simplicity of heart" (Wisd. i. 1) finally results in practising goodness by instinct.

One effect of this single eye to God is a peculiar serenity of mind; according to our Master's teaching: "The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single thy whole body will be lightsome" (Luke xi. 34). God is light, and when He reigns in our souls without a rival, all is brightness and peace. One of St. Teresa's maxims is this: "Purity of heart is tranquility of mind." A conscience regretful of petty meannesses never suffers from any other regret. Clean the windows of your soul, and the divine sunlight will beam and flash into it and beautify its every remotest corner. A half-hearted service, on the contrary, darkens the moral perceptions; spoils devotion, and makes consolations impossible; feeds vicious tendencies; and, like dead flies in the ointment (Eccles. x. 1), deprives the motives of whatever remnants of good behavior we possess. And this habitual meanness of motive gradually destroys the power of resistance to downright mortal sin.

Explicitness in confession—an act of heroism for some of us—is usually a sign of deep searching sorrow for sin, whether grave or light. And this sacramental self-abasement is rewarded by the grace of generosity of spirit towards God. Humility is a medium of exchange for God's best wares. The practice, occasionally at least, of small penances is of marvelous benefit, such as petty abstinence as against little greediness at table, a half-jocose apology for an unthinking sarcasm, abstinence from the daily paper to-day for unguarded reading yesterday. Of such things will our kindly Master carefully take note. Knowing our scanty store of courage, He will say of us what He said of the poor widow's two brass mites, that we have given all we had (Mark xii. 42).

During this holy time, my brethren, the Church's efforts in her public offices are bent on bringing us to Calvary, which St. Francis de Sales calls "the academy of perfect love." Thoughts about the Passion of our Redeemer dredge the channels of grace deeper within our hearts. Who, that realizes the generosity of Jesus Crucified, will be mean-spirited in serving Him? Rather he will become prompt and alert and full-handed in answering His calls to a devout life.

II. The Activity of Faith.

"Walk, then, as children of the light; for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

My brethren, all goodness and light, all justice and truth, are our spiritual prerogatives. This condemns the spirit of mediocrity. For many a Christian is content with a little goodness and a small share of light. Let it not be so with us.

No true man can live long contented with the grosser conditions of ordinary life. Sooner or later these must be elevated in his mind by a perception of truer because eternal realities; otherwise his existence palls on him. Now our truest reality is the marvelous fact that we have an immortal destiny. Therefore, to live like a man is to take a man's share of those holy activities which make for eternal happiness, our own and our neighbors'. That and that alone satisfies our nobler aspirations, and justifies our claim to membership in the divine brotherhood of Holy Church.

God constantly urges us to this glorious vocation by interior impulses, bright and strong; and externally by the example and precepts of His divine Son, and by the lives of saintly brethren living and dead. The only self-content He allows us is in loving Christ perfectly and praising Him worthily; that comes first, and is invariably followed by the winning, through our own example and teaching, our fellowmen to a clearer view of the divine loveliness. Herein does the love of God absorb brotherly love, imparting to it its own excellence, and sharing with it its own supreme prerogatives. Nations founded, continents explored and peopled, armies marshalled, and wars fought to victory—these are within the scope of a human force that is low, for it achieves but passing results. Such glory may and often does belong to monsters of iniquity. But the man who cleanses a sinner's soul from beastly vice is master of a force essentially divine, and he wins a battle whose spoils are joy everlasting. If thou hast a militant nature, learn from God how to conquer thy brother's soul and wrest it from the dominion of Satan.

To place the gentle yoke of Christ's faith upon a libertine who has never known any divinity but passionate indulgence; to soften the heart of a proud skeptic to the sweet influences of our Redeemer's love; these are exploits worthy of God Himself. And He accomplishes them continually by using the intelligence and the affections of humble Christians.

The first movement of actual consciousness of the divine sonship in a true Christian, is accompanied by a disposition to communicate to others the supernatural favors—even the very state—he himself enjoys. The first cry of divine life is for the joy of communicating it to others. See how the voice of Jesus stirred His first chosen follower: "And Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who had heard of John (about Jesus) and followed Him. He findeth first his brother Simon, and saith to him: We have found the Messias, which is being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus" (John i. 40, 41, 42). O beautiful fecundity of truth and love. Andrew was not absorbed in the sweetness of even our Savior's company; no, that heavenly privilege stirred his brotherly love into life and action. Ere Andrew was content to sit down with the Son of God in delicious peace and joy, "he findeth his brother Peter......and he brought him to Jesus." He is placed forever as the patron of convert-making converts.

When God comes to a generous soul he "findeth first" his brother, and only then does he enter upon the divine companionship.

Apply this lesson to actual conditions. Let us ask what truer sign can there be of genuine penitence, than for a pardoned sinner to relate to an evil companion the joy he feels after a good confession. Behold it in the woman of Samaria, as she goes home to her friends from her interview with Jesus at Jacob's well: "The woman ......went her way into the city, and saith to the men there: Come and see a Man Who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not He the Christ?" (John iv. 28, 29.) And thereby a multitude of converts were made, for the people flocked out to Jesus, and He preached to them, and "of that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him, for the word of the woman giving testimony." If we did but know it, the experiences of the confessional and of the communion railing are a missionary treasury of inexhaustible richness. Tell a Protestant friend how close to God you have come while receiving the sacraments, and in many cases the effect will be conversion.

The most conspicuous virtue of a Christian must be charity. To say of one he has strong Catholic faith, may be followed by the fatal qualification that he did not live up to it. But to say of one that his life was inspired by Catholic charity, can only mean that his faith was not only sound, but that it was made alive and kept at work by charity. Generosity and patience, sympathy and gentleness, achieve the eternal victory only when inspired by the true faith: this furnishes the motives, charity the substance of final perseverance in God's favor. Blessed is the man who his whole life long turns to God for the motive and to his neighbor for the object of his Christian career. Some are noted for this from childhood, and such a one can exclaim at the end of even a very long life: "From my infancy, mercy grew up with me" (Job xxxi. 18). Others win the prize only after many vicissitudes, perhaps in a desperate struggle just before death. But others trust to the name and the associations and the sentimentalities of religion, only to depart this life leaving among their friends a painful uncertainty of their eternal fate. Hence the warning of the Apostle: "Let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18).

This much at least we can do, each and all: we can weep and sigh with the Savior of the world over the sins of men; we can spend an occasional hour of sorrowful meditation on Christ's Passion; lamenting that His blood has been shed in vain for so great a proportion of mankind, and then question ourselves about our share of the blame. And without doubt it is from such a state of mind that the truest motives of zeal spring forth into activity.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

I. Fidelity in Little Things.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

THE great miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes (John vi. 1-15), my brethren, enhanced our Lord's fame wonderfully, and gave Him entrance to many a heart in Israel. What happened right after it can also profitably engage our attention, namely, the gathering up of the fragments from the miraculous banquet "lest they be lost." Plainly our Master teaches attention to little things by this care of crusts and fragments. We need the lesson, for some of us would be willing to do a few immense acts of virtue to purchase the liberty to follow our own will in the many little details of life. But virtue sure and perpetual is readiness to follow God's will against our own in the habitual trifles of daily existence. An unbending constancy of purpose is a better sign of loyalty to Christ than any sudden dash of heroism. Fidelity in little things is the practical side of holiness: let the bigness be in intention. How shall one learn to speak well in a great oration? The ancient master Quintilian answers: by practising conciseness, clearness, and dignity in ordinary conversation. It is not different with spiritual proficiency. Every duty, however slight, is a drill ground for the great battle of life.

It is not so much the intrinsic value of what is offered that God considers, as it is the generosity of spirit which inspires it. Whatsoever I offer, if it be but the "two mites" of the widow, let it go with the "whole substance" of my good will, and it will be "more than all they" have offered who have cast great sums into the treasury of merit from a motive of human respect (Luke xxi. 1). The obedience of the Apostles in hurrying through the well-filled crowds, filling up baskets with the fragments of that supper, pleased our Savior better than if they had fed all

Israel in God's name and for their own glory. The kitchen girl may merit a higher crown for washing the dishes of a meal served by her mistress to a pauper, than the mistress herself merits by the charity of the meal itself, unless her generosity is in imitation of that of Christ.

Ordinary duties become of extraordinary merit before God when performed with purity of intention: a truism of sound spiritual doctrine. This eliminates self-interest and vainglory. In spiritual exercises it moderates sensible sweetness of devotion. Nor are the motives only negatively good—merely freed from dross of human ends and aims. No; the intention is elevated, it takes God into account; and it is superlatively good if it conforms itself to the example of Christ—the more consciously the better. In all this, the homely and humble virtue of obedience to one's immediate superiors is joined to fidelity to the gentle inspirations of grace. Herein does an active temperament learn how to write humility and zeal into one bright little focus of merit. St. Teresa was so high in sanctity that she waked the dead to life, and yet she was granted visions of angels whilst engaged in scrubbing the convent corridors or hoeing in the garden. "Never was the convent so scrupulously clean," says Father Zimmerman in his Introduction to the *Way of Perfection,* "as when it was Teresa's turn to do the scrubbing. Never was the food so tasty as when she did the kitchen, though she might have been seen in an ecstasy, saucepan in hand." When one has only good will without good works—for which, in truth, opportunity does not always serve—he may rightly praise himself thus far, and say, "It is better than nothing." Yes any little something is better than nothing, infinitely better. An upright intention, O it is a whole universe compared to the barren vacancy of an indolent mind.

So, after the main works of religion are done, such as holy Mass and Communion and Confession, precious fragments must be gathered up "lest they be lost"—thanksgivings, good resolutions, short prayers for the living and the dead.

The big field is planted with corn, and that crop is the mainstay of the farm and its men and beasts. None the less does the farmer plant his pumpkins and his squashes between the rows of corn, and after the corn harvest these are gathered in—the joy of the farmer's kitchen. So between the rows of the greater merits we care for the littler ones, and our Master will have good regard for them—household duties better done; "a cup of cold water given in My name" (Matt. x. 42) with better grace; the meanness of a fellow-workman more good-naturedly borne.

I am well persuaded that some of you will say: "This borders on the theoretical, this scraping the platter of meritorious works. It is technical exactness rather than hearty service; a sense of fitness dictates it rather than the grand practical goodness, which forgets the little things of religion in its absorbed devotion to the more essential: it is a meticulous, finicky, parsimonious plan of conduct." I answer by calling you back to the events narrated in the Gospel of the loaves and fishes. The Lord was rich, and yet He was parsimonious of bits of cold victuals; He was rich enough to care no more about instantaneously setting out a banquet for an immense host of hungry men, than for hindering the waste of its fragments. Here were His five thousand hungry hearers scattered over a vast field. "Make the men sit down," He said, with the majesty of the Son of God. And with equal majesty He afterwards said to His group of Apostles: "Gather up the fragments lest they be lost." It was not the bigness but the charity of His gift that made it great. The littleness of the crusts of bread and the broken pieces of fish that could not belittle His appreciation of the worth of the commonplace. It is the same with any heart uncommonly fervent towards God. It was the Lord Who superintended the spreading of the super-plentiful banquet, and it was the same Lord Who superintended the cleaning up of the fragments "lest they be lost." Consider the feelings of the multitude. Half an hour before they admired the zeal of the Apostles feeding them plentifully; and now?—perhaps they were even more amazed to find them passing in and out among them with baskets and filling them up with pieces of bread and half-eaten fish, meanwhile saying, doubtless: "Take care how you waste these leavings; pass them over to us, for the Master Who gave you the abundance now forbids you to throw away the fragments." Jesus is rich in everything that is good, and yet He is thrifty of our unregarded kindnesses, our spontaneous acts of good nature, our scrupulous care of the eyes as we walk the streets, our anxious longings to do the will of His Father in things little as well as great. Mark, too, that when this Giver of all good things had ascended into heaven, and from the right hand of His Father was guiding His Church in her earliest steps, He chose the first Christian martyr, not from among those giants of grace and of power, His Apostles, but He chose him from among the deacons, whose original vocation was to "serve tables" (Acts vi. 2).

The Venerable Cesar Baronius was a high favorite of St. Philip Neri; and he was of such a powerful intellect, so erudite a student of Christian antiquity, that he is called the father of modern Church history. He had been set forth upon his career as a historian, and was all along guided by his saintly master, who nevertheless made him do the cooking for the community for years and years together, so that the great annalist finally chalked over the fireplace this inscription: "Baronius *coquus perpetuus*—Baronius the perpetual cook!" If the flattering tongues of his admirers would hoist him up on the high horse of vainglory, the clatter of pots and pans and skillets would fetch him down to his right level of humble service of God. He knew it well; this regimen of humility tempered his glory, and he blessed God and St. Philip for it accordingly.

But there is a delusion to be guarded against. For some go to the other extreme, seeming to think that the kingdom of God consists in a scrupulous observance of the littler things of religion—and nothing more. Their mind is not to love little things with a great heart for everything both little and great, but is just to cherish little things with the petty spirit of the Pharisees, who, as the Lord complained of them "tithe mint and rue and every herb; and pass over judgment, and the charity of God" (Luke xi. 42). Such a one will lift his hat passing by the church of a Sunday morning, missing holy Mass that he may spend a godless Sunday at the seaside. No; it is by the great virtues of faith and hope and love and deep sorrow for our sins that we are saved. But these can hardly possess our souls without the loving performance of the minute duties of our state of life, bringing to bear on the innumerable details of every day the full strain of holy intention that equally fertilizes every tall cedar and every humble violet in the Lord's garden. Observance of a system of pious practices may degenerate into formalism, and become a masquerade of religion; whereas if such devout practices are intelligently observed, they are incessant reminders of God's sovereign majesty and our Redeemer's infinite charity. They are then the rich fringes of the robes of royal sonship.

II. Fidelity in Little Things.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

By these words our Lord expresses His carefulness about the little things of His service. He would have us cultivate tenderness of conscience—not scrupulosity, but yet sensitiveness—about whatsoever may please or displease God. He values in us a keen appreciation of the smaller opportunities for serving His honor and our neighbor's welfare. You notice this in the way devout souls conduct themselves between their confession and communion. They had rather smile than laugh, for they covet to be recollected. They quit innocent amusements because absorbed in waiting for their divine Guest: things innocent in themselves are now imperfections in their eyes because out of place. Fidelity at all times is good, but unremitting watchfulness is now their rule.

They realize that in proportion to the fervor of preparation shall be the fruit of grace in receiving Holy Communion: and fervor is shown in matters small as well as great.

This spirit deals extensively with the safeguards of charity and of truthfulness in conversation, according to the prophet: "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue" (Ps. xxxviii. 1). Lallemant says: "Purity of heart consists in having nothing in our soul or in our conduct which is in however small a degree a hindrance to the operation of God's grace." Where there is a proper appreciation of God, His presence, His love, the distinction between greater and littler service is not insisted on; all is great in His service.

The littler virtues are often such as are natural to us, if our nature be guileless or kindly. Consider politeness, which surely is not a virtue that shall make one a hero; yet when practised in imitation of Christ, it is made a supernatural trait by the dignity of its motive. Though ranked among natural virtues, yet "politeness is sister to charity." Not St. Francis de Sales (as one might suppose), but St. Francis of Assisi uttered that saying, he to whom good manners was a companion virtue with the most rigid austerity of life. But when one is polite to his neighbor for the love of God, then charity's little sister becomes her queenly companion.

Natural virtues are grouped by the Holy Spirit, as follows: "Wisdom teacheth temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life" (Wisd. viii. 7). Prudence distinguishes the true from the false, the reasonable from the unreasonable, and is the scaffolding of the noble temple of supernatural faith. Justice distinguishes the good from the bad, the right from the wrong, and is the working plan of the supreme virtue of Christian charity. Fortitude distinguishes the strong motive from the weak and the brave deed from the timid. It is the raw material of loyality to an enlightened Christian conscience. Temperance distinguishes the too little and the too much from the just enough, moderation from excess, and under the light of grace it is the wisdom of Christian self-denial. Thus the great cardinal virtues, as these four are named, though natural in themselves, are made divine in their transformation by grace.

This same little virtue of politeness may easily be promoted from a pawn to a queen on the chessboard of Catholic zeal, for it is good manners that recommends good messages. In that point of view here are two canons of conversation: In conversing with anyone, remember that your topic is usually of less interest than yourself. The chief rule of every conversation is to win the regard of the man you are talking with. Hence, the saying of one who was both the best public speaker and the best private talker of his day, St. Francis de Sales: "It is the mark of a good man that he is never outdone in good manners." There is no plainer mark of matured spirituality, than that one has become exactly aware of how hard or easy it is for others to get on with him in conversation. Akin to this is another canon of familiar speech, when our talk begins to grow serious: the compulsion of charity is the only way which is allowed to Christians for forcing conviction.

"A heated imagination," exclaims Fénelon, "violent feelings, reasons set in battle array and volleys of words, effect nothing. The right way is to act as in the presence of God, divested of self, doing what we are able to do and according to the light we have, and satisfied with what success God may grant us. A word uttered in this simplicity and peace, produces a greater effect, even in external affairs, than many violent and eager efforts. As it is the Spirit of God that speaks, it speaks with His power and authority; it enlightens, it persuades, it touches, it edifies."

When shall we realize that little defects of manner are opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and are an intrinsic hindrance to persuasion?

When there is question of little acts of a strictly supernatural kind, we are in the ordinary routine of the better sort of Christians. Says St. Teresa: "If I might help, by my prayers, to make but one soul love God more, and praise Him only for a short time, I think that to be of more importance than to dwell in glory" (*Relation* xi., 8). No doubt one may clutter up his life with an excessive minuteness of piety, so that the greater things are almost forgotten in devotedness to the lesser; just as we sometimes notice persons on entering a church making straight for the shrine of some favorite saint, and forgetting to genuflect to the Saint of saints on the high altar. But littleness need not be pettiness of devotion. For example, one who always makes the sign of the cross when the clock strikes, is not likely to lack punctuality in household duties, be they great or little.

PASSION SUNDAY.

I. Meekness.

"But I seek not My own glory."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

These are words of humility, my brethren. And yet our Savior uttered them just before He proclaimed His eternal divinity, saying to the Jews: "Before Abraham was made, I am." Seeking His own glory was proclaiming His high prerogative as God; but as Man He sought only His Father's glory. Holy Church bids us now meditate on this meekness of our Master and Model, because it is appropriate to Passiontide, upon which we are entering, and during which we shall constantly ponder the Lord's self-abasement, according to the Apostle: "Looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, Who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. Think diligently upon Him" (Heb. xii. 2, 3).

Opposed to humility stands vanity, which is doing good that men may praise us; or it is omitting to do good lest men might ridicule us. This latter meanness is called human respect; the former is vainglory. The vice of pride is doing good or refraining from evil for self-praise. One may be quite above and even despise the praise of men, yet only from love of self. Of such a haughty nature the proverb says: "The arrogant man is too proud to be vain." But the humble man, though he disdains men's praise as a motive of conduct, does yet more disdainfully regard self-praise. God's approval and that alone is his actuating motive. How tersely and loftily does St. Paul express this: "To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day; but neither do I judge my own self. For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

A high opinion of oneself often lies hidden for years amid the faithful practice of virtue, like a serpent secreted under a fragrant mass of flowers. When this self-esteem appears openly, it goes by some such name as zeal for God, till a sudden humiliation sent by Providence, or a gradual grace of disenchantment, manifests its ugly identity. The test is in one's power to bear humiliations; for many who love humility hate humiliations. Again it may be revealed by the delusion of "rights." The man who has rights soon has wrongs to complain of, and presently is that disagreeable creature and that social nuisance called "the man with a grievance." He may even develop into the man with a lawsuit. "Admonish them," says the Apostle, "not to be litigious, but gentle, showing all mildness towards all men" (Titus iii. 1, 2). There is no meaning in this apostolic admonition "not to be litigious," unless it be to yield up one's rights. The truly humble Christian feels that he has no rights, unless he holds those of others in trust or represents lawful authority as an incumbent of some office.

It is as if one were born with an inveterate hallucination that two and two make five: so is the delusion of personal excellence born with our fallen nature. Two and two make five is no plainer an error than is my good opinion of myself, when I am left to my own conceits:

vainglory is a native twist in my very soul. Only by long corrective treatment do we reduce this swelling pride, a treatment in which the Saints are the physicians, and the Gospel of the humble Man of Nazareth the pharmacopœia. We notice the good results in the Saints themselves, St. Philip Neri, for instance, in reference to taking advice. His biographers relate, that "he always thought the judgment of others better than his own." Yet was he the wisest man in Europe, and the best poised. Whence, then, his self-distrust? We answer that it was not self-distrust, but self-knowledge, and bright acquaintance with human nature generally. He made his own decisions, but his raw material for them was the counsel of wise and devout men, which had this advantage, that it was disinterested, totally so. One's views of one's own projects are apt to be warped by interest, or personal likes and dislikes, or narrowed by one's environment. I am wiser in advising others than in deciding unaided my own affairs. But who acts with this serene wisdom save a man of the Gospel, according to our Master: "If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all, and the minister of all" (Mark ix. 34). This meets the patent objection to humility: How may one be well poised and independent in character, vigorous in action and resourceful of means, and nevertheless "rather do the will of another than his own?" (*Imitation,* Book III., ch. xxiii.) Because that is God's corrective of our delusion of self-exaltation. As St. Francis de Sales teaches: "When God gives us inspirations He begins by one of humility and obedience." The man who obeys another man from a divine motive, shows by that act that he is full of force. The same St. Francis was the best convert maker in the whole Church of his day, a vocation given him by God through an obedience to his bishop, and then carried on with most daring energy. The Calvinists, whom he won, ascribed their conversion to his meekness—that he did not know when he was insulted, that he had no "rights" to defend, and that meanwhile he presented Catholic doctrine with the impersonal dignity of an ambassador of God.

To be called a fool by honest men is a bitter mortification; you and I, my brethren, shrink away and disappear at such a disgrace. Not so St. Francis of Assisi. That boldest of initiators said to his first followers: "Fear not to be called by men fools or even madmen; announce penance in simplicity, trusting in Him Who overcame the world by humility." Was not the change of the world from paganism to Christianity the greatest victory men ever won? Yet listen to St. Paul, the leader of the cohorts that won this victory: "We are fools for Christ's sake" (1 Cor. iv. 10).

The Saints fix this as a test of spirituality: to praise one's virtues as if they were lent to them by God, Who, they insist, often withdraws them to punish our sense of proprietorship. No man is rich with borrowed money; why then should I feel rich with Christ's lendings to me? "For what hast thou," it is St. Paul who reproaches me, "that thou hast not received?" And he rubs the bitter ointment in deeper: "And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received? (1 Cor. iv. 7.) St. Teresa bids us "praise God for the virtues we possess, as if they were found in someone else" (*Interior Castle,* Stanbrook, VI., Mansions, ch. i.). Now the personages we have named and quoted from, in witness of the force of the gentle virtue of Christian meekness, were types of our nature's most militant valor, most aggressive initiative: the tremendous Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Francis de Sales and St. Francis of Assisi, St. Philip Neri and St. Teresa. Of the last-named submissive character Holy Church says in the breviary office: "This weak woman, without money or any help from man, succeeded in building thirty-two monasteries, in the face of frequent opposition on the part of earthly princes." The Saints speak of a "courageous humility." Some Catholics, on the contrary, exhibit humility as a license for cowardice; we mean those who are silent about their religion when among Protestants because, as they say, they are not learned. They claim to be humble, but they are pusillanimous. Those who really care little for their own glory claim the privilege of manifesting the glory of God boldly and continually. It is of such a one that St. Peter tells, saying: "If any one speak, let him speak as the words of God" (1 Peter iv. 11).

Our Redeemer's profession of humility, twice uttered in this day's Gospel, is borne out in His entire career. In His Incarnation the Infinite God humbled Himself to become a man, and He that was the splendor of the eternal Father's glory (Heb. i. 3) is gladly the affectionate companion of malefactors. "The table of sinners," exclaims Father Thomas of Jesus, "is no less agreeable to Thee than that of angels" (*Sufferings of Jesus,* xxi.). We shall soon commemorate His Passion; and we shall behold Him washing His disciples' feet, saying to them and to us as He ends His task: "If then, I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John xiii. 14); and He adds: "For I have given you an example." And, my brethren, is it not one of the most amazing of His examples? Lord, it fairly stuns me to see Thee, Thy Rabbi's robe laid off, kneeling before each of these rough men, pouring water over their dirty feet, washing the dirt off, and wiping them clean and dry, O so affectionately; and not excepting the feet of Judas Iscariot. Thy heart was full of love for them—that is plain. But this is equally plain: Thy notion of dignity and honor is wholly the reverse of ours, who stand up for our rights with towering pride. Well mayest Thou add this, Thy admonition: "If you know these things, blessed shall you be if you do them" (John xiii. 17). My brethren, what a great need there is to pray for humility, especially that kind shown by our Lord in the feet washing, since it is humility which so beautifully advances the supreme virtue of mutual affection. This virtue of meekness cures the evil of discontent with one's state of life, when it happens to involve the lowly occupations of service in house or field, in mine or mill. Once a reverend Mother Superior said to a lay sister: "Well, sister, how are you getting on?" The answer was: "Miserably. I am good for nothing except to go back and forth from the kitchen to the laundry." Then the reverend mother said: "Very well. But don't forget that there is but one step from the laundry to heaven."

A difficult virtue is meekness—who has not proved it so? But it is won little by little, being a prize granted by installments to the earnest seeker. Often the outward man refuses to honor the drafts of the inwardly humble man, and one who is meekly disposed has a harsh voice and is hard featured. But, says Fénelon, "What is required is that if you cannot be gentle in your exterior, strive for Christ's sake to be humble in your heart."

II. The Wisdom of Little Ones.

"But I seek not My own glory."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Humility, so marvelously exhibited by our Lord, is the wisdom of little ones (Luke x. 21); and these are God's great ones.

St. Vincent de Paul was at one time Grand Almoner to the Queen Regent of France, and his audiences with her were held in a room known as the Chamber of Mirrors. He was asked if so luxurious a place did not tempt him to vanity. "On the contrary," was his answer, "it excites my humility, for the great mirrors there reveal me perfectly to myself, and remind me of the all-seeing eye of God." The virtue of humility holds a high place, for it is often ranked first among the moral or human virtues, because, as St. Thomas teaches, it is nearest of kin to the theological virtues. For it taught St. Vincent to live and act under the eye of God, as faith taught him to adore the truthfulness of God, hope to cherish His purpose to save us, and charity His love-worthiness.

Humility is the mirror chamber of the soul, because the truth about ourselves, inward and outward, past and present, the truth as God knows it, is what we love when we are humble. Pride, on the contrary, is a chamber of false lights, not seldom deceiving even good souls. "Ambition," says St. Ambrose, "enthralls those whom no vice could delight, whom no lust could corrupt nor avarice deceive." So strong a virtue as meekness can hardly be had as a result of natural reasoning or be indigenous to our fallen nature, which was corrupted by pride. What else can the Christian's humility be but an infused knowledge of all the difference between God and man? That known, whatever difference exists in my favor as between myself and any other man, is to me as a grain of dust compared to the bulk of the universe. How foolish to be forever thinking of my advantage over my fellow-creatures! Why do I forget the advantage God has over me?

Whosoever cultivates humility must, if he would hold his own, win a daily victory over self-deception. Then he grows not only in deference toward his neighbor, but also in candor and simplicity, dealing more and more openly with him, making steady progress toward the unchallenged reign of truth in his life. Only a lover of lowliness can say with the prophet: "I have chosen the way of truth" (Ps. cxviii. 30). It is not merely from devout exercises of religion that one gains knowledge of himself, though these advance the whole line of virtues; but also from all eager, curious search for what makes him contemptible in his own eyes. Such a one is devoted to looking after what he does not like to find. He is a searcher after damaging truth.

"Let not the foot of pride come near me," prays the Psalmist (Ps. xxxv. 12). Now the foot of pride is the fundamental lie of all deceitfulness, namely, self-deceitfulness. A man who is proud stands on a mental concept radically false, namely this: I am what I think myself to be. He is shod with this lie as with a pair of shoes. The corollary is this absurdity: Trust thyself, O my soul, and not thy God and thy brethren; be thy own court of approval, appealing often and quick from the judgment of thy fellows, even though they stand for God.

One strange effect of self-adulation is that our pride not only censures our neighbor's virtues, but it also makes war on his vices, particularly his vainglory.

"For," says Fénelon, "the defects of our neighbor interfere with our self-conceit; our vanity is wounded by that of another; our haughtiness finds our neighbor's insolence ridiculous; our excessive activity feels rebuked by the indolence of this person, and our gloom is irritated by the frivolous gaiety of another person." Some years ago we were told by an aged priest that once a certain failure he had made in a good work was attributed to his sour looks and imperious manner. He resented this at the time, and the remark did not convince him in the least that he was hard of face and had a bullying air about him, and this was because he disliked his censor, and despised his superficial piety and his makeshift methods. "Later on," continues our old friend, "God gave me the grace to see that, if anyone whom I loved had so admonished me, I should have seen the truth of it instantly." Sometimes your contempt for another hinders your regarding his protest. Yet it is plain that an imperfect man may know more about certain weighty facts and their balance one with another than does a perfect man. Humility bids us go to the saints for principles, but also warns us to refuse nobody's evidence about facts and conditions.

"A plain sign of perfection is the wish to be corrected"—a pointer from St. Francis de Sales. One may indeed obtain humility by sincere self-reproach for obstinacy of opinion. A shorter, though rougher, road to the same end is accepting correction. A low estimate of one's own clearness of view, or one's balance of mind—do you reckon such a feeling among your graces, my brethren? Once obtained, contradiction does not arouse feeling, but rather induces reflection.

PALM SUNDAY.

I. The Agony in the Garden.

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

My brethren, we are entering that week in the year which all Christendom terms as Holy Week, because it commemorates the holiest actions of our Savior's career, namely, His Passion and Death. Hence at Mass to-day you listened to the chanting of Christ's Passion according to St. Matthew; and many another sacred observance will day after day remind you of the last hours of the Son of God on earth. Cast yourselves at His feet and acknowledge with tears of deep contrition how unworthy you are of such a Redeemer. Prepare yourself diligently for confession and communion, placing yourself in spirit among His bitter enemies, in the ranks of whom you have in your time enlisted and trained by your perfidy and uncleanness, and many other kinds of sinfulness.

Of all the rights of brotherhood, none is so sacred as that which is the most painful, the right of one brother to bear the shame of another. This right our divine Brother claimed before heaven and earth in our behalf, when He entered the Garden of Olives. Here it was that He willed, finally and irrevocably, that death might be dealt out to Him instead of to us, who have so well deserved even eternal death (2 Cor. iv. 10-12). And that death penalty He would taste by degrees, and with the lingering torture of anticipation, that the fullness of His atoning love might cover, yea and overlap, the horrible excesses of our wickedness. Such is the meaning of the sorrows of the Garden. And we are not to forget that His vastness of meritorious pain is wholly undivided; that as He was capable of redeeming all of us, so He was careful to single out each one of us by what we may call special intention, He concentrated upon every particular sinner the whole precious weight of that price wherewith He hath purchased us. He enabled every one of us to go to the offended Father separately and alone, and point to His Son and our Brother, and to say with the Apostle: "He loved me, and He delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

The Son of God thus entered the Garden of Olives to prepare His soul for the great task He had assumed, namely, to make superabundant satisfaction to His Father for our sins. Brethren, this, as your faith tells you, is your salvation: He Who is the head of our race and the first-born of all its universal brotherhood (Rom. viii. 29), has such a love for us that "He has washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Apoc. i. 5). To expose our miseries to His eternal Father in prayer, in a prayer that was His act of contrition for the universal wickedness of the human race—such was His purpose in entering the Garden. Now it behooves us to heed His injunction to His Apostles: "Watch with Me." O Jesus, watching and agonizing for my sake, do Thou arouse my torpid spirit and inflame it with such contrition for my sins, that I may echo in very truth Thine own words: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," for I know that Thy only consolation is that I shall keep Thee company in Thy affliction and lavish upon Thee my heartfelt sympathy. I know that a criminal on the eve of execution dreads to be alone; his dearest, his only comfort is the society of affectionate friends—for him to dwell alone with self is to dwell in the hell of evil memory. And so it is with Thee. Thou art to be my proxy on the gallows of Calvary, and I dare not, cannot, leave Thee alone with all my sins upon Thee, face to face with an angry God. Brethren, behold Him sinking "flat upon the ground," bathed in a sweat of blood, and strive to realize how dear a price He paid that He might become the refuge of all sorrowful sinners.

So sudden and literally prostrating was the manifestation of our sins to Him, that our Savior presently begged the eternal Father to give Him relief: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." O how candid a prayer is this, acknowledging in all humility that His power of endurance was strained to the uttermost. For He was counting our sins, and He was tasting their deadly bitterness, as one drinking a chalice, yea, drinking the bitterness of the damnation they merited. A candid prayer, indeed, but also one of obedience. Our Lord's submissiveness to His Father's justice was simple and absolute. This is a lesson to us; because open dealing with even the all-seeing God is a rare gift; we are self-deceitful in our very prayers. And as to accepting the shame of our baseness from a sense of justice, giving welcome to the sorrows of life in a penitential spirit, following quickly the inspirations of grace to practise penitential works—all this is far from us. May the agonizing Jesus teach me to repine at adversity only as He did, submissively and lovingly. O my suffering Redeemer, my heart overflows with sympathy for Thee, as I behold Thee in Thy agony. It is all for me and my salvation; and the more intolerable it grows within Thee, the more determined art Thou to pray and to suffer for me the longer. My reverence for Thee, my amazement as I consider Thee, my confidence in Thy love for me, are—in spite of all my weakness of spirit—beyond my power to express. I feel as Thy servant St. Augustine felt when pondering Thy atoning goodness, for he could only say over and over again: "Who am I, O my Jesus, and Who art Thou!"

The loneliness of our Lord's agony in the Garden is a conspicuous mark of its intensity. No one ever lived who so loved the company of men as this chief Man of all mankind, this centre of all the sweet joys of mutual communion. From the first moment of His birth, when His soul was enraptured with His mother's voice, the sound of human speech was more melodious to His ears than the chants of the nine choirs of angels; for He is essentially the Lord of men rather than of angels. And the society of Mary and Joseph, of the shepherds and the Wise Men, and in after days the thronging of the multitudes around Him—so sadly mingled, of sinners and saints—was of far greater preference to Him than the companionship of the celestial legions, whose twelvefold array He will presently reject for the embrace of Judas and the furious legions of Jews thirsting for His blood: men and even the worst of men are His chosen company. But yet He longed, O so unutterly, for good men, faithful souls, to stand by Him in this His hour of deadliest trial. So, therefore, He reproached Peter and James and John: "What! could you not watch one hour with Me?" Consider our Lord's distress: the remote and solitary place; the darkness under the olive trees; His disciples overcome with resistless sleep; His blessed Mother absent; His heavenly Father thrusting Him deeper and deeper into the woe and horror of His atonement, and quite deaf to His pleadings for some mitigation; the divinity that was in Him yielding further and yet further place to the misery of His human nature, so exquisitely sensitive to every lightest ingratitude, so intensely craving love—consider this confluence of every degree and every species of inner sadness together with the absence of every comfort, and you will better appreciate the Lord's complaint uttered generations before by His prophet: "I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none" (Ps. lxviii. 21). No wonder that the heavenly Father seemed at last to relent, or at any rate so far relaxed the severity of the divine decree—which imposed on His Only-begotten Son the full equality of sorrow's misery with justice's demands—as to send Him an angel to comfort Him. But this could only have happened after our Redeemer had persevered to the last final requirement, not so much of divine justice as of divine love. For the holy narrative assures us that Jesus "being in an agony prayed the longer."

Herein do we learn a high principle of our religion, namely, that of bearing patiently the ill-treatment of men. I am loaded with sins, and instead of seeking opportunity of atoning for them by enduring the injustice of others, I resent it. The worst of sinners is often the most sensitive of mortals. The littlest taunt enrages one who has most dreadfully insulted God. And now behold Jesus Christ, innocence itself, Whose deepest soul is tortured with the bitterest misery on our account, absolutely resigned to an ordeal of ill-treatment, the most fearful ever known. We should beg of Him the grace of resignation when we suffer from the pride of others, or from their ingratitude, or their injustice, or their hatred. In such cases we should imitate Him by immediate and entire forgiveness of injuries, complaining only to our eternal Father, by Whose permission every pain of ours is visited upon us. O Jesus, when shall I have the grace to behold Thee always before my eyes? When shall I imitate Thy loving patience rather than gratify my resentful feelings?

It is characteristic of our Redeemer's love, that even His deadly terror about the sins of all mankind could not make Him forget His poor, forlorn, drowsy Apostles—no, not even the company of the bright angel whom His Father sent to comfort Him. He three times interrupted His prayer of agony to seek His Apostles, as much to reassure their wavering hearts as to enjoy—if He could only get it—their words of sympathy. A plain lesson to us. For the selfishness of human grief is proverbial. We must realize that the very overflow of a Christian's bereavement is the measure of his charity towards other sufferers. Those who "sleep from sorrow" like the Apostles, whilst their more heavily burdened associates keep a lonely watch, may indeed be chided, but they must also be consoled. May our Holy Week abound in such consoling messages!

II. Obedience.

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

These words of inspiration, my brethren, are high praise of the virtue of obedience, whose sanctity is identified by them with the cross of Jesus Christ—words very appropriate to the beginning of Holy Week. It is a virtue which conforms our will to that of God, first in

His direct commands through the voice of an enlightened conscience, and then through His indirect authority, as exercised by our fellowmen whom He has placed over us. Of course the best obedience is that praised by the Apostle, as being lit up with both the light of reason and of faith, and observed from motives of divine and brotherly love, our "reasonable service" to God, and our willing submission for God's sake to those who are in any kind of office: "for there is no power but from God; for those that are, are ordained of God" (Rom. xii. 1; and xiii. 1).

Nor need we be critical of even machine-like obedience, except when it is given by a nature capable of better things. Even the average man, to be sure, should have some initiative—what are called dough faces are not a type of beauty in God's picture gallery: some power of deciding for oneself is needed by all, and is quite necessary for more than ordinary success in life. Meanwhile the commonplace is always the commodity most generally useful. A routine submissiveness is a guarantee of at least a mediocre and quiet success. A clock is a mere machine, made all of dead metal. But if it tells its minutes and its hours with fidelity, it (literally in course of time) wins a dignity almost human. It is so with the dull but obedient nature; only this: he must keep the motor power in close touch with the Prime Mover of all praiseworthy action, namely, God. Otherwise his obedience degenerates into mere conformity; and domestic duties as well as those of daily industry, however intrinsically honorable, are done in a laggard and perfunctory spirit. Life becomes then a treadmill, and the temptation to revolt grows irresistible.

Herein is shown the need of the interior quality of obedience, that of spiritual motive. Such is the obedience which has a place in our prayers before it sets our limbs and senses to work. Therefore does Père Lallemant say: "Unless one has a due esteem for the interior life, and sufficient acquaintance with it to rank it above every occupation, it is not possible to acquire an even mind in accepting the various occupations and changes incident to life" (*Spiritual Doctrine,* Faber's Edition, p. 143). It is the inner life, my brethren, fed by Mass, Confession, Communion, spiritual reading, and prayer, which secures real obedience. When one's occupation is directly with God, since God is above all, His influence is made supreme. Is this or that external matter His will? Then it ministers indirectly to my one all-absorbing occupation, which is dealing with God by inward mutual communication. The reward of this is supernatural guidance in our natural activities, better understood by experience than by explanations. But its greater, diviner reward is affirmed by our Master: "Whosoever doth the will of My Father, Who is in heaven, he is My brother, My sister, and My mother" (Matt. xii. 50). The very ideal of blessedness in this life is to do outward things from an interior divine impulse. Interiorly to embrace the guidance of our human masters as the manifest will of God, is perfect wisdom and perfect goodness. It is a form of the supreme virtue of divine love, of which the Apostle says: "Love is the fulfilling of the Law" (Rom. xiii. 10).

When is a man most free? When, having possession of perfect human freedom, he is so freed from love of it that he will promptly exchange it in whole or in part for the freedom of God in following His divine guidance in the littlest particulars of daily life. Obedience to the interior impulses of grace joined to obedience to the dispositions of Providence in the external order—behold true freedom. Herein we discover the Apostle's "liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. iv. 31). Perhaps, too, this is St. Peter's meaning, when he invokes love as the sponsor of Christian submissiveness: "the obedience of charity" (1 Peter i. 22). Plainly, no obedience, however timid and meticulous, shall be slavish when it enjoys the inspiration of filial charity towards God. Take self-will out of the heart, and disobedience vanishes from conduct. "Every virtue in which there is more self-will than obedience," says Father Thomas of Jesus, "ought to be suspected;" and he adds: "Christ, Who sacrificed Himself on the cross out of obedience, loves obedience better than sacrifice" (*Sufferings of Jesus*, xiii.). With not a few souls, good ones, too, the main struggle for happiness is in managing to be submissive to the inevitable. A man subject to dyspepsia should not only have a care of the food he eats, but also of the state of his stomach. Pray God to cure your tendency to complain instead of grumbling to Him about those whom His providence has set over you.

A conspicuous advantage of an obedience which is lighted up by the lamps of divine grace, is in the affectionateness it thereby gains. The spouse in the Canticles says of God's voice: "My soul melted when my Beloved spoke" (Cant. v. 6). If I recognize in my husband's or my father's voice the echo of that of my Redeemer, my soul readily and affectionately obeys. Can this be the case with one who is not something of a meditative character? It can only be the fruit of communion with God. We have an example of it in our Savior's catching the tones of the venerable lawgiver of Israel even in the harsh voices of the men who thirsted for His blood; for He commanded His disciples: "The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not" (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3). And this He said when very near the iron clutch of these very men. Now consider what a variety of human beings He most calmly obeyed, from the delightful obedience He gave His mother and St. Joseph, down to the equally perfect but most painful submission he yielded to such fiends as Judas and Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate. In every case He obeyed because His Father so willed, a motive of conduct not appreciated by the wise ones of this world. But Jesus affirms it to be that truest of wisdom revealed "to little ones; yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight." And then He, although the most obedient of men, immediately adds His birthright of universal sovereignty: "All things are delivered to Me by My Father" (Matt. xi. 25-27).

Meantime our right way of acting in case we differ—and sometimes we cannot help differing—with him who exercises rule over us, is—what? Which shall I do: endeavor to incline my superior's will to my will, or to incline my will to his? Well, to be sure, if I think I have good reasons on my side, candor compels me to state them to him; I must make an honest attempt to win him to my way of thinking. That failing, it would be well for me to take to my prayers for a little while, and then be quite content to accept *clôture* in the discussion. And finally I must realize that as between me and the one holding authority, in the last resort his will and not mine is God's will. My brethren, there are no troubles of life or death that may not be settled by taking God into account in dealing with them. Hear, therefore, St. Paul: "Obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not serving to the eye, as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God" (Col. iii. 22).

EASTER SUNDAY.

I. "Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned into Joy."

"Be not affrighted: you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified: He is risen, He is not here."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

My brethren, never did grave so entirely devour the hopes of mourners as did that of Jesus the hopes of His followers—so entirely and so pitilessly. That stone which was so "very great" might have borne this inscription: Here lie forever buried the hopes of mankind. So utter was our Savior's downfall, that it pulverized the remembrance of His miracles in the disciples' minds; and it swept out of their memory His promise of Resurrection. This was better remembered by the enemies of Jesus than by His friends, for the conspirators begged from Pilate a guard of soldiers to be placed over the tomb, saying: "Sir, we remember that that seducer said, while He was yet alive: After three days I will rise again" (Matt. xxvii. 63). Jesus was utterly ruined, His cause hopelessly lost. And (His friends must have said) what will become of us? We shall be killed. Barely managing to cling together, they hid away behind doors safely locked and bolted.

And now the light of eternal life streams from that cave of death. Jesus rises a conquerer of death and of sin. He (as all Catholics believe) first visits His Mother, to reassure her, whom He loved best, and who had given Him forth to earthly life in the cave of Bethlehem. He appears many times to His friends and His Apostles during that wondrous forty days stay on earth, "speaking to them of the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3).

So does Jesus rise from the grave of our miseries, my brethren, especially from the misery of our sins. The sorrowful prayers of the sinner are like the angels of the Resurrection. Your act of contrition last night in confession causes as great an earthquake and transformation in your life as did the coming of that mighty spirit from heaven, who rolled back the stone from the sepulchre and escorted the glorified body of the Lord back again into the land of the living (Matt. xxviii. 2-4). Jesus answers your repentance as quickly as ever He did the fiat of His own soul claiming renewed possession of His stricken body; for, as St. Paul insists, if "He was delivered up for my sins, He rose again for my justification" (Rom. iv. 25).

Thus does He return to us. The effect upon us should be a miracle of hope: confidence in God's purpose to save us is the peculiar grace of this festival. For us He was born, for us He died, for us He returned to life again. He is always occupied with us, occupied and preoccupied and absorbed in life and in death, and at last in Resurrection. How much this heartens us. When we again take up our sword and buckler and resume the war against our vices, we should assail first of all our despondency, that pusillanimous weakness whose allies are procrastination and cowardice. "Believe me, sisters," exclaims St. Teresa to her nuns, "the battle never comes soon enough for the soldiers of Christ."

Holy Church is an anxious mother, my brethren, and she knows our frailty; but to-day she bids us be full of joy and hope, quoting often in her liturgy the prophet's exhortation: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice in it" (Ps. cxvii. 24). From the Lord's Resurrection must begin a new life of joy, "that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4). An essential need for final perseverance is that a penitent sinner shall not easily be disheartened. Neither the memory of his own shortcomings should sicken his hopes, nor the allurements of bad company dismay him. For comfort of mind let him pass alternately from Calvary to the empty sepulchre, and from the empty sepulchre back to Calvary. The battle of our life was there fought and won, and the banner of our Captain's Resurrection is shining with the light of victory. Penance, as we know, is a dire necessity, but it is not the final and crowning virtue. It is a means to an end, and the end is love and joy. The gifts of heaven are granted, indeed, to our tears; but our triumphant Lord rejoices most perfectly in our smiles. "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart" (Ps. xxxvi. 4), says the royal prophet, the foremost penitent of the ancient dispensation. When a mother weans her baby, she laughs at the wails and woes of the little one deprived of his only food—as he fancies. But she knows that he himself will soon laugh as he enjoys the food of the strong. St. Augustine in his *Book of Confessions* addresses Christ as "the food of the full grown." When you received Him this morning in Holy Communion, He became in you the seed of immortal joy. That joy, rightly appreciated, and properly reasoned and tempered by holy caution, is your best hope. It is a principle of life which abhors all that can hurt you, such as bad company, neglect of prayer, the sloth and poltrooning and the meanness of a sinful life: just as a living man loathes the rottenness of a fresh buried corpse. If you are appalled by the memory of strong temptations, lay to heart, as an afterthought of communion, the words of St. John: "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4). In one of her hymns during the Easter season the Church bids us wipe our eyes, assuring us that we have paid and overpaid the tribute due to sorrow and to tears, for now, she adds, the resounding voice of the angel proclaims the return to life of Him Who is the destroyer of all death and woe and sin.

I am a sinner, but a penitent one. The race of mankind is divided at this moment into enemies and friends of God, and to that latter class I now belong. Once, indeed, I trained with the other class, I loved them and their ways rather than God and His commandments; and had I so continued, at the day of judgment I should have been among the goats; and with horrible demons I should have remained in close company—I should have been lost and tormented forever. But I am no longer a sinner, no longer destined for the awful prison of hell. I am a penitent and a true one: if I am not glad what can make me glad? When a culprit is pardoned out of State's prison he is called an ex-convict; he is disgraced; he is never trusted again; he can never live down his shame. When one is pardoned out of the prison of mortal sin, there is no such stigma upon him. He belongs to an honorable class; his whole condition is honorable. Mary of Magdala was released from slavery under seven devils; and the Son of God set her before His dying face and at the right hand of His stainless Mother on Calvary; He granted her His first recorded apparition after His Resurrection. Is not this a real comfort? Is it not a welcome call to us—that of the Apostle? "You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord." And he bids us maintain and perpetuate this open sunlight of confidence, adding: "Walk then as children of the light" (Eph. v. 8). Thus does Jesus return to us from the dead. He resumes His broken body, He calls back to His heart His spilt blood, and His whole frame of bodily existence is alive with His God-glorious soul. As His sufferings were for us unto atonement, so is His risen glory ours unto hope. Thus it is that God "hath regenerated us unto a living hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto the inheritance incorruptible" (1 Peter i. 3). As He rose again so do we rise again, for we "are the body of Christ, and members of member" (1 Cor. xii. 27).

It was with the Resurrection in view, that the Saints could watch the decay of their mortal bodies by old age or by disease with a quiet, nay, with a joyful spirit. "All ye limbs and bones of my body, praise ye the Lord, Who has given you the power to suffer." These words were the frequent ejaculation of the Venerable Sister Crescentia during her last illness, which was exceedingly painful. It showed the equability of a true Christian's mind while contemplating the body's present destruction, and its certain restoration in Christ triumphantly risen. It is that sentiment St. Paul expressed, when he wrote: "For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake; that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. iv. 11).

We hear of battles being won under adverse circumstances, by soldiers fighting with the courage of despair: a plain mistake, for despair has no courage, and is a trait of a thoroughly routed army. What is meant is that brave men, fighting to vindicate their own and their country's honor when all else was seemingly lost, finally made up their minds to die, and in seeking death they fling back the enemy and recover all that before was lost. So it is with a desperately tempted soul in the battle against sin. All joy seems lost; hardly a wakeful moment that is not a battle ground with some foul appetite. Then this soldier of the Lord makes a compact with his God that he will die for Him, die as it were by inches, rather than yield up the divine honor to the evil one. And presently he finds his enemy routed, and the joy of victory is radiant in the very air he breathes, and is sweet in the very blood that flows through his veins. Such is the joy of Easter to a penitent. But yesterday he was hard pressed by the rebellion of the flesh, and to-day he is full of victory.

Never was this word of the Holy Ghost so true as now: "My delights are to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31). Jesus parted from us with unspeakable sadness; He returns to us with an infinite gladness. He was impatient to be back among us. We may almost say that Jesus grudged the time spent after His death in Limbo among the elect of His ancient Church. He longed for earth, which (by means of His Eucharistic presence) He was never again to leave till its destruction at doomsday. Here among men are His delights, here is His paradise—no less here than above the empyrean; for here are we, the beloved of His heart. Joy in His heart must now and evermore outrank sorrow; and His joy in triumphing over death must be greater than His sorrow was in suffering death. Joy must surpass sorrow in His soul as His charity surpasses His justice. So must our happiness of to-day exceed our sadness of yesterday.

II. The Resurrection.

"He is risen; He is not here."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

The Resurrection of our Savior from the dead is the foundation of all our hopes. Trust in Him risen as you sympathized with Him crucified, and you will fulfill all your part, and He will not fail in His. The divine virtue of hope is what Holy Church would enforce upon us in all her Easter lessons; this is the day of her triumph and of ours.

Many a one of us halts half way on the road to perfection, because he is afraid to trust God in the difficulties he must encounter. Many a sinner continues to wallow in his wickedness, because, thinking only of his own weakness he forgets the strength of God.

Is the way dark before you? Trim your lamp with the oil of hope, and courageously go forward. God will say of you: "Because he hath hoped in Me I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he hath known My Name" (Ps. xc. 14).

Have you made a good Lent and Holy Week? Then say with St. Paul: "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound" (2 Cor. i. 5). It is not piety to exclaim against your own sinfulness, unless you immediately add the praise of God's blessed mercy.

Mary Magdalene was desolate because as she said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him" (John xx. 13). But how she overflowed with joy when she saw Him risen, shining with glory and full of love. Then she exclaimed: "I have seen the Lord!"

What a boon! And what a comfort! And it is granted to each one of us as well as to Mary Magdalene. Our Redeemer speaks to us in our despondency about our sinfulness, and He invites us to trust Him, to confess our sins sorrowfully, and then courageously to go forward in the path of innocence.

This time of the year especially is set apart for a joyous and buoyant spirit. Perseverance is not for the distrustful. It is the greatest of graces, and for that reason it is the one God best loves to bestow. Christ rose from the dead that we might have a love stronger than death.

The strength of holy love is holy hope. Do not claim to love God until you are sure that you trust Him. Easter is the best day in the year for making an act of hope. That act goes before the act of love.

Brethren, it looks as if our weak spot is the virtue of hope, for many a one of us will neither do his own part, nor trust that God will do His in the work of salvation. "Give glory to the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever" (Ps. cvi. 1).

Therefore, brethren, in giving you our Easter greetings, we place foremost the holy virtue of hope. May our risen Savior fill your souls, and the souls of all who are dear to you, with the grace of confidence in God. May you love Him deeply as the sure refuge of your penitent hearts, and the overflowing fountain of the grace of perseverance.

LOW SUNDAY.

I. Imitating Christ.

"Then saith He to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said to Him: My Lord and my God."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

THE faith of this doubting Apostle was restored, and it was also deepened wonderfully by direct contact with our Savior's very wounds. He was wholly unreasonable in his demand for this privilege, for the proofs of our Lord's Resurrection were overwhelming without it. But when he actually saw and felt Him, when the physical contact he had not deserved was yet benignantly granted him, his whole relation to Christ and to God was changed. His act of faith is supremely the most explicit in the whole narrative of the Gospel. Let us consider the value in our religious life of such a close approach to our Lord and our God on our part.

As we have said, to see and to touch his risen Lord was a holy desire. But his conditioning his belief in the Resurrection on such a literally palpable proof was highly blameworthy, for it is a blessed thing to have the testimony of truthful friends of even a wondrous miracle, and a reasonable thing to credit them: that done, one may and must yearn for a closer union, whether for the sake of faith or of love. St. Paul had that granted him so intimately that he could claim: "I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body" (Gal. vi. 17). And our Savior fixed His wounds in the body of His servant, Francis of Assisi, so marvelously, that Holy Mother Church says that the fame of it melted all Christendom into fervor, at that time very generally chilled by worldliness and sensuality. And what else happens to you and me when we receive Holy Communion—though it be done invisibly—for the body of Jesus then received shines with His glorified wounds, and we are joined to Him "in the likeness of His death," in order that we may resemble Him "in the likeness of His Resurrection" (Rom. vi. 5).

God is highly pleased that we should long for a perfect knowledge of His Son even in this life; and how shall we know Him perfectly except as the Crucified? The marks of the nails and of the spear, do we not venerate them in our crucifix? Do we not appeal to them in our prayers?

"With the holy One," says the prophet, "Thou wilt be holy, and with the valiant perfect" (2 Kings xxii. 26). To be so close to Jesus as to love Him intimately and imitate constantly—herein is the perfection of valorous holiness achieved. The closer we are to our Model the stronger is His influence over us. He would have us always right near Him. "If any man minister to Me, let him follow Me" (John xii. 26), is His injunction. The boldest word that that bold follower of Christ, St. Paul, ever utttered is this: "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 16). Bold, indeed: and yet true in every point, for he could truly claim to possess "the power of His Resurrection," for he had sought and gained "the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death" (Phil. iii. 10). The imitation of Christ is the highest motive of action—to do something simply because He did it, not resting on intrinsic reasons, however divine these may be, not waiting for precept, but just saying: Thus and so did Jesus act, and for me that is the sum of all possible good motives.

Père Lallemant says that "as the perfections of God shine forth in our Savior's sacred humanity, He desires that we should manifest His spirit and His graces in our conduct, and by a perfect expression of His virtues make ourselves like unto Him. The acts of virtue produced by this motive of imitating our Lord and resembling Him are far more noble and more pleasing to God than such as are formed by the motives proper to the virtues themselves" (*Spiritual Doctrine,* Faber's Edition, p. 355).

How fortunate: our law is to copy after a certain plain example as exactly as we can; and whilst sure to fall short of perfection, yet striving again and over again to reach our standard—an example the most beautiful, touching and attractive, that possibly could be. He it is Who proclaims this: "I have given you an example" (John xiii. 15). St. Peter holds us to it even in regard to the fearful heroism of the cross: "For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter ii. 21). We cannot attain to equal Him; but we never can escape His invitation to try to do so.

In this we always need the advice, and we often need the warnings, of other imitators of Christ, His priests and our more devout friends; just as the sails of a ship need the rudder and the anchor. But the motive power of the good ship of life is the breath of the Holy Spirit, without which we cannot so much as name the name of Jesus (1 Cor. xii. 3), least of all advance towards the harbor of perfect love. The imitation of Christ is a grade of love separate and quite distinguishable from other grades; it is the offspring of such a faith as Thomas had after he had put his fingers into the marks of the nails, and his hand into the place of the spear. One would say to a wayward young friend, "Don't try to imitate that rich man for you cannot afford it." Not so with imitating our Lord, although He is a divine model, and has the fullness of the Godhead (Col. ii. 9) in that gloriously wounded body of His. For He shares His wealth of celestial virtue with His friends for merely the asking (Rom. x. 12). But yet a close imitation is called for. To be the disciple of Plato it is enough to know and to believe his teaching. But the relation of a Christian to Christ is immensely closer than that of a Platonist to Plato. The Platonist expounds and defends his master's theory; it is a discipleship of disputations and of opinions. The Christian may or may not expound and defend the doctrine of Christ, but he *must* be able to say in all truth: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

When a man loves to imitate Christ as much as He loves His faith and His Church, he is well on towards perfection. When one but wishes to resemble Him even in a few things, he has stepped a good pace beyond the ordinary goal of Christians. Nor does one need to break away from the state of life in which Providence has placed Him in order to rank well among those whose pattern is the Son of God. St. Eligius (known in France as St. Eloi) learned to follow the footsteps of our Lord whilst living in the world making and selling gold and silver plate and trinkets to the nobility; and later on he was forced to live at the royal court, and there amid prodigious vanities he became a yet greater Saint.

It is the unanimous teaching of all spiritual masters, there is an especial comfort for the afflicted in this holy practice of close imitation of our Lord: and which of us shall be of their number sooner or later? Blessed John of Avila wrote to a suffering and downcast friend: "The Almighty does not wish you to be lonely and sorrowful out of any ill-will He bears you, but because His blessed Son was afflicted; and God would not have us unlike Him. Nothing in us pleases Him so well as a resemblance to His Only-begotten Son." All that we have said here is but a series of truisms; but yet imitation of Christ, whether it be directly, or indirectly by copying His Mother and our favorite Saints, is seldom the explicit intention of our conduct. This is especially true of those who are but newly changed from a sinful life to a penitent one. In old age, however, and in times of very great bereavement, we are more readily conformed by motive and purpose to our divine pattern.

Practically considered, my part is to strive constantly to pattern on Christ by overcoming myself. My wishes and comforts, my tasks and relaxations, are to be eagerly watched for opportunities for exercising this self-discipline, meanwhile the interior motions of grace scrutinized for guidance—always and in all things to check self-conceit and self-indulgence, and explicitly because "Christ did not please Himself, but, as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon Me" (Rom. xv. 3). O happy vocation of a Christian! O profitable barter, thus to exchange the joys of an ignoble life for the noble ones of self-restraint, in union with the incarnate God. No other spirit than this can secure a decided progress towards the greater favors of a spiritual life. It is said of Blessed Mother Barat that she was patterned on her crucified Spouse so closely, that "The history of the Passion of Christ affected her to that degree that it was impossible to read it in the refectory; she could not eat whilst the sufferings of her Lord were spoken of."

This doctrine, so simply true, so plain to understand, finds an enemy in what is known as routine, which is a method and assortment of devout practices resting in itself, and dogmatizing in the interests of pious regularity and outward conformity. Routine says: Do this, this way and do that, that way, do it very exactly, do it so many times, and the result is infallibly a holy state of soul. Doubtless there is much good in the practices thus waged. Indeed often enough the sacraments themselves are thus recommended, mingled with commonplaces of devotion. This often enough induces forgetfulness of what is essential in all spiritual exercises, namely, the intention. In God's name do all the good things you can, but have only one single end in view; modeling on Jesus Christ. Otherwise you will eat the rind and lose fruit of your devout exertion. Some there are who are like a sick man who would seek to be cured by selecting remedies from among the old formulas in a drug store, rather than by the original diagnosis and treatment of a physician.

Look at the matter from the standpoint of the Heart of Jesus. Each heaven-winning act of ours, whether it be of love, or patience, or self-control, or of any other virtue, originates in Christ's will. It is worthy of heaven only because He inspires it. Each detail of it—and here we must be careful to note an additional principle—has been done beforehand, at least in essence, by His own very Self while on earth. The inner force and the outward substance have been all His own before being offered to us. We must, therefore, draw the rules of our religious conduct from the maxims of His Gospel, closely obey the movements of divine grace, and finally for the outward performance of our good deeds.

II. Confession of Sins.

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Sin is the universal evil of our race, my brethren; nay, strictly speaking, it is the only evil in the world. Who can say with entire certitude that some time or other he has not offended God mortally? And nearly every grown man or woman is conscious of having offended God very many times. This thought, when once it gets possession of us, robs us of our peace, embitters every wakeful hour. How shall I be rid of this poisonous sting of remorse, involving as it does the horrible dread of future punishment? Such is the instinctive cry of every truly reasonable being.

Our Savior answered that fateful question the first moment He resumed the teaching of His disciples after His Resurrection. The very evening of the day He broke the fetters of death, He empowered His Apostles to break and destroy the chains of our sins: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." That they might do this heavenly work the more efficaciously, the more intelligently, He bade them carefully discriminate between worthy and unworthy applicants for pardon; for He added to the power of forgiving penitent souls, the obligation of refusing to forgive impenitent ones: "Whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Any exercise of the office of reconciliation would demand a knowledge on the pardoner's part of what he was going to forgive; but the Savior's express command to discover the cases in which pardon should be withheld, makes the confession doubly necessary.

Brethren, this "ministry of reconciliation," as St. Paul calls it (2 Cor. v. 18), thus divinely placed in the hearts and hands of our fellowmen duly ordained to it, is a wonderful boon to us. It compels the salutary practice of confession to another man. The boastful claim: I will deal with God direct about my sins, can only be uttered by one who does not know the human heart, least of all his own heart. Why not deal with God alone about your other misfortunes, your loss of health, or wealth, or reputation? In times of deep affliction, God has so made us that an exchange of confidence between man and man is an essential requisite. Indeed every strong feeling demands expression, whether it be one of sorrow or of joy. The beginnings of repentance are inseparably accompanied by a longing for consolation, and also for advice, a longing founded upon an instant necessity of our moral nature.

Outside the Church many condemn confession as degrading. Brethren, have you found it so? One in ten thousand does feel degraded because he makes a bad confession; he is untruthful and therefore is degraded. But to the true penitent, instead of confession being a degradation, it restores the priceless boon of self-respect; because it is a test of sincerity and of humility; and it proves the existence of deep flowing sorrow of heart. And you know that these sentiments, besides being essential to a penitent's peace of mind, are also prerequisites for obtaining God's pardon.

Consider how many things may taint our sorrow for sin: ignorance, feebleness of character, frivolity, self-deceit, excitement, human respect—to say nothing of such fatal defects as obstinate pride and worldliness. Each and all of these, as your own experience has often proved, my brethren, yield to the counsel of your confessor, who besides his sacramental gifts, is a devoted friend, one made acquainted with your whole condition of sin and of sorrow, and acting in a spirit of the deepest sympathy.

Our Redeemer, blessed be His mercy, has thus raised the offices of friendship, exercised in the direst necessity of our whole life, to the dignity of a sacrament in His Church. May He give us all the grace to use it frequently and devoutly.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

I. Zeal for Souls.

"And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also must I bring; and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Brethren, the Church of Christ is necessarily a missionary body; its members, high and low, must constantly be engaged in seeking God's children and Christ's brethren who have gone astray, inducing them by every means of persuasion to return to their Father's house, His Church. Do you not catch that spirit in the words of the Church's Founder given us in the Gospel of to-day? "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." Can we be true to Him, and yet have no heart to help Him recover His children?—the lost heirs not of St. Patrick or St. Boniface, but of God. Let us not become water-logged with racial Catholicity, nor grovel in the selfishness of family or personal Catholicity, to the exclusion of that divine Catholicity which is zealous for the salvation of our outside brethren who are Christ's "other sheep."

I ask your pity for your separated brethren. And, indeed, should you not pity any man who must pass through the storms of temptation and of sin deprived of the help of the sacrament of Penance; and who never can know the strength and the joy of Holy Communion? Pity such a one? Why, my brethren, some of us ought to weep tears of pity over ourselves, that we have not so much as named these divine privileges to the non-Catholics among whom we live. Yet we cannot deny that the Church's sacraments are as much theirs as they are ours—these wonderful means of grace—if they could but be persuaded of their right to enjoy them, and be shown how to obtain it. Do you realize that there are men all about you who for lack of confession and communion curse the day they were ever born? for they are the veriest slaves of mortal sin. This fatal ignorance—are you in any such case to blame for it? Is it due to your cold-hearted silence?

All men are brethren; all are children of the same heavenly Father; all are equally Catholics by nature, as we might almost say, because man's natural reason clamors for Catholic truth. And the sin-stricken soul of man yearns, however blindly, for the sacraments of the Catholic Church. The people among whom you live are wearied unto death with doctrinal doubts, they are worn out with the delusions of Protestant error; and they are deafened with the discord of religious disputes. Multitudes of them are only waiting to learn of that sweet peace of Catholic faith, that divine unity of Catholic brotherhood, which is so cheaply yours, and which you, perhaps, have never once thought of telling them about. Cannot you play the part of a true friend to so much as one of your non-Catholic neighbors, telling him what Catholicity has bestowed on you of "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost?" (Rom. xiv. 17.) Listen to God's description of false and true friendship: "There is a friend for his own occasion, and he will not abide in the day of thy trouble......And there is a friend a companion at the table, and he will not abide in the day of distress. A friend, if he continue steadfast, shall be to thee as thyself" (Ecclus. vi. 8, 10, 11). O Good Shepherd of souls, grant us the grace of holy friendship for Thy children who are gone astray, to tell them of Thy salvation, to lead them into Thy Holy Church.

But someone might say: Why not devote ourselves wholly to saving our own. Many Catholics are losing the Faith; everywhere we find ignorant ones to be instructed, wicked ones to be reformed. We shall hardly save our own if we do our very best inside the fold. Now, my brethren, the motive of such language is doubtless praiseworthy. Yet think a moment: it is often easier to convert a Protestant than to reform a bad Catholic. Again, have you not noticed that the very ones who are active in saving Catholics are the foremost in bringing in Protestants? Let us save our own? Amen to that holy call.

And yet it is too often uttered by a timid soul; one who does nothing to save anybody but himself; one who is too shamefaced to speak a single word about religion to his non-Catholic friends.

Every right-minded Catholic should ask himself what he can do to spread his Faith, for the rightness of his mind is justice, and he feels the Faith burning within him as an honest debtor feels coin burning his pocket till he pays it out to his creditor. A true Catholic is a dispenser of the truth. Such a one was the first Apostle called by the Good Shepherd, St. Andrew: "He findeth first his brother Simon and saith to him: We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." And another such was Philip, who was called right after Andrew: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith to him: We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus the Son of Joseph of Nazareth" (John i. 40-45).

Therefore are converts our prime convert makers. Seldom does one of them feel content to stand alone. Often enough he finds and brings another convert inside of a month, and pretty soon yet another. These souls are all afire with thankful zeal, and their usual talk is Catholicity. They feel with the Sage: "Good things that are hidden in a mouth that is shut, are as a mess of meat set about a grave" (Ecclus. xxx. 18). King Ethelbert was an early convert of St. Augustin of Canterbury, and it was said of him that he felt as if he had conquered a kingdom if he could persuade one of his subjects to embrace the faith of Christ.

Now the apostolate of conversation is the layman's divine vocation to convert-making—nay, it is not seldom the best vocation even of the zealous priest. But the layman does not wait for the priest, knowing that conversation, which is a free exchange of thoughts, is his opportunity ten to one rather than the priest's; for his pastor is not always among Protestants as he is. An earnest soul waits on no one when a good deed is waiting on him to be done. St. Martin was but a petty officer in the Roman army, when of a winter's day he saw a beggar nearly naked and shivering by the wayside; and he cared not the least that the older and wealthier and higher officers passed him by. No; rather he felt that very thing to be an indication that Providence meant no one else than himself to clothe the unfortunate creature; and he did so. And you remember, my brethren, that it was Jesus Christ Himself, Whom, in the disguise of a pauper, he had thus sheltered from the cold. Nor do you forget that the Good Samaritan's charity was not chilled by the cold example of those who passed by the poor wretch left by robbers half-dead on the road to Jericho (Luke x. 33).

Some Catholics seem to think that one must have a university degree before talking religion to Protestants. They can talk politics glibly enough. Why are they so silent about religion? St. Vincent de Paul, during the insurrection of the Fronde, was interrogated about his political opinions. "I am for God and the poor" was his immediate answer. Have whatever political opinions you think right, but let your religious principles be paramount and characteristic in your dealings with your non-Catholic friends. Do you not know your little catechism? It has more raw material for your apostolate than many volumes of divinity; it is the quintessence of your holy Faith. You can talk up goods that you want to sell; and why? Because you profit by their sale. And do you not profit by equipping the soul of a friend with the good things of eternity? St. John of Avila was the greatest orator in Spain; and, being asked to lay down some rules for the art of preaching, he answered that he knew no other rule than fervent love of God and zeal for His honor. You, perhaps, have a sharp wit for use in the pleasant hours of friendly talk; why not use it to ease and vary and adorn some talk of a religious sort? It is curious that a follower of the Good Shepherd had rather be smart than charitable in his conversation. You may, besides, be afraid of intruding. But remember that a little insistence is no intrusion, especially when your motives are transparently friendly. On one occasion the Son of God intruded so far as to seek acquaintance with a bad woman, and a heretical one, too, at the well of Samaria, so that He might tell her how to be saved (John iv. 7). And on another occasion He invited Himself to the house of Zacheus, a publican and a sinner, to reward him for his contrition for his sins with the blessings of His truth and love (Luke xix. 2).

Not all Catholics must be learned; but each must be well enough informed to receive the sacraments intelligently. You cannot solve the mystery of predestination. But can you not tell what happens to you when you go to confession? This morning your heart was full of joy because it was filled with God in Holy Communion. Can you not say that much in a sincere little talk with a close friend or two, who will be amazed at such things, and who will stimulate you to further disclosures of your gems of holy joy? What Catholic is so simple as not to be able to tell about the Eucharist, the Mass, the priesthood—about the good all this does him and those who are dear to him? No Protestant knows more than you, nor half as much. The humblest Catholic has the advantage of knowledge if he has but that of manliness.

I have two good eyes, and seeing a blind man I feel sorry for him, and gladly give him my hand to lead him into a safe path: I pity him, I sympathize with him, I am zealous to help him. I have the light of Christ in my soul, and seeing a neighbor darkly groping after salvation—why is it that I do not take *him* by the hand and guide *him?* The next time a doctrinal lecture is announced, invite some non-Catholic friend to attend it with you. When a Mission to non-Catholics is given, canvas zealously to get a good attendance. Give your non-Catholic friend a good book to read, and then eternal truth speaks to him in your stead.

Our Redeemer's manner was not meddlesome, in the intrusions of His we have named; nor was His talk offensive. None knew so well as He that a feast spread in bad taste tastes bad. To spread a banquet of truth one need not be a controversialist; for a gift offered on the point of a dagger is not welcome. On the other hand, you will be astonished how a few kind words about your religion will set your hearers thinking—yea, and praying also. "But," exclaims the foremost controversialist of our Faith, "the servant of the Lord must not wrangle, but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient" (2 Tim. ii. 24). Why dispute? A comparison of doctrines—that is all you need. Difference of belief should be developed so as not to breed personal aversion. And this is the easier method every way.

Alas that sometimes the good, peaceable Catholics leave their holy cause in the hands of a fellow Catholic, who can only swell and swagger as a warlike champion. He is by nature that kind of a man, who, if he be but a mere associate, by resistless instinct assumes airs of superiority. If God has made him father of a family, he is a heavy-fisted father. For guidance of friends he has only bullying. He strives to persuade a Protestant by the arts of pugilism. And so he universally fails, and, worse yet, leaves prejudice deepened by hatred. The gentle sort of Catholic leaves his Protestant friend unconvinced, perhaps, but yet pleased with the kindness with which he has been treated, and quite willing to renew the conversation later on. Thus are converts made.

II. The Sheep "Not of This Fold."

"Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also must I bring."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Charity, beloved brethren, is never so well adorned as when its trophies are immortal souls, and the charity of Jesus Christ presseth us (2 Cor. v. 14) onward into the innumerable masses of our separated brethren, to give them the true Faith, to call them into the Good Shepherd's one fold. How can any man love Christ and live his life through wholly unconcerned for Christ's straying sheep? Zeal for souls is love of Christ in its most attractive form, armed with its most aggressive energy.

We are accustomed to attribute to charity alone the creative force, the ardent endeavor known as zeal for souls, but is this right? Shall we stop at charity as an apostolic motive? Is there no obligation of justice binding Catholics to embark in the American apostolate?

We meet with not a few bishops whose very souls are in pledge for their non-Catholic people, and who say with the Apostle, woe is me if I preach not the Gospel to them (1 Cor. ix. 16). There is many a parish priest who says in his inmost heart, that to Catholics and non-Catholics, to Jews and infidels, to all human beings in his parish limits, he is a debtor (Rom. i. 14) to impart to them the only way of salvation, that is to say, the Catholic religion, whose exponent he is appointed by God to be.

Hence it has come to pass, that bishops have not hesitated to deprive their Catholic people of the services of some of the clergy that their non-Catholic people might have the Bread of Life broken to them by a diocesan apostolate. This is the chief reason why there are now a large number of diocesan bands in America devoted to making converts as their primary vocation. We are perfectly familiar with the origin and history of each of them. In not one single case was the band formed by the Ordinary out of a surplus of priests. In every case it cost the bishop hard thinking and close managing to, as it were, rob the Catholics of priests they could barely spare, in order that the non-Catholics might have at least a few apostolic men to care for them. Not a single Apostolate in America but was formed with the same conscience that inspires, nay compels, a bishop to weaken the clerical equipment of already established parishes in order to form a new one. The apostolates have been formed universally, because the chief pastor of the diocese was entirely convinced that his non-Catholic people were entitled to it on the score of right and justice. And it is thus that both charity and justice mutually borrow and lend from each other, that both gifts may be granted and debts paid to our separated brethren in Christ.

Nor is it otherwise with individual zeal. For a man who is conscious of but meagre gifts of intellect, and enjoys but rudimentary instruction, yet becomes a maker of converts by dint of holy zeal. "For wisdom opened the mouth of the dumb, and made the tongues of infants eloquent" (Wis. x. 21). A dull mind and a zealous heart is like a fire of green wood in a stove wth a strong draft. The ardor of purpose, purity of intention, patient perseverance, more than supply for the lack of brilliant mental gifts. Learning is rare, kindness is abundant; and it wins its way where learning is shut out. Mark well how in serving the sick a kind hand can make bitter medicine sweet. If this be true of caring for bodily ills, it is yet truer of ministering to souls sick with error's malady. Catholics seldom realize how bitter a dose is the true Faith to a soul whose malady is sectarian prejudice. Do you wish to be a persuader of men? Remember the Wise Man's saying: "He that walketh sincerely, walketh confidently" (Prov. x. 9). When you are your ownself no less inwardly than outwardly, then you are a master of men—providing you have the truth of God to impart. The air of sincerity is the air of mastery.

All virtue should be graceful and amiable. Bear that in mind when talking with non-Catholics about our holy faith. Zeal for souls should be the most winning form of the supreme virtue of brotherly love. In dealing with non-Catholics, learn the difference between firmness and harshness. Also learn how to be mild without any mixture of weakness. But you might say: "Suppose a bigoted Protestant insults me?" In answer: "Suppose you were a physician, and your delirious patient should curse you, or even strike you?"

That love of our non-Catholic neighbors is a law all Catholics acknowledge. Not all, however, realize that it is a law with a penalty. Listen to our Redeemer: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. vii. 2). What would become of us if Holy Church treated us with the same indifference in our religious necessities as we treat our non-Catholic brethren? What is the highest evidence of loving Christ? Persuading others to love Him—evidence of love and tribute of love; Christ our God is love; love delights in lovers.

Think of the many families nowadays tasting all the bitterness of the death of loved ones without a word of religious comfort. We are living in an untrodden wilderness of heathenish misery—easily to be turned into a blooming garden of Catholic consolation, if we had but a little zeal. How deep the joy of a devout confession and communion—all unknown to non-Catholics. Hundreds of thousands of the unchurched are in our cities yearning for this joy, little dreaming how near at hand are its everflowing fountains.

Some of us forget the full significance of the words of the Nicene Creed, chanted every Sunday at Mass: I believe in one holy Catholic and *Apostolic* Church. Apostolic Catholics are no less necessary than holy Catholics. Father Hecker used to say that the Propaganda at Rome was the right arm of the Church. If this be so of Rome, should not the same be true of every diocese, of every parish, of every devout society, nay, of every single Catholic individual?

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

I. Recollection.

You know, my brethren, that St. Joseph is venerated by the Catholic Church as her universal patron; and this Sunday is set apart for special devotions in his honor. An increase in all virtues may therefore be expected in answer to our prayers to him to-day. But there is one virtue which may be very confidently prayed for, because it was a favorite one with St. Joseph; and that is the virtue of holy silence. He played a part in the Incarnation of the Son of God second only to that of the holy Mother herself, whose betrothed spouse he was by divine appointment, and the guardian of her divine Child. To Joseph direct did the eternal Father send his angels with messages the most important to the welfare of the human race (Matt. i. 20; ii. 13, 19). To him, as to a father, was Jesus subject at Nazareth as He "advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and man" (Luke ii. 52). Yet from first to last not a word of Joseph's is recorded in the holy narrative. The entire glory of this greatest of men is in doing and thinking and praying most mightily and most silently. It behooves us to worship that kind of holiness, and to consider our own opportunities in practising it. We are, however, to guard against an unholy silence. There is a sullen silence showing a bitter spirit; there is a cowardly silence, shirking the defence of one's neighbor from biting tongues; there is a vicious silence, mutely consenting to evil.

There is a holy silence which is Joseph's, the silence of love in the presence of the Beloved, when speech would profane the sacredness of one's feelings—prayerful thoughts broken only by occasional ejaculations. No one can hope to be a spiritual man till he has learned the value of that silence. A relish for retirement is evidence of a cultivated spiritual taste. Listen to a witness whose words were the prime eloquence of God's ancient Church: "And Moses said: Lord, since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant, I have more impediment and slowness of tongue" (Exod. iv. 10). And as to listening to men, who wants to listen to creatures after being spoken to by the Creator? What fervent communicant snatches up the Sunday paper after his close interview with the Eucharistic God? Among the ancient Christians the Abbot Asteros taught: "If you do not want the fruit of your holy desires to be dissipated, impose on your lips a prudent silence, 'For all the labor of man,' says King Solomon, 'is for his mouth' (Eccles. vi. 7). Keep the heart open to receive the instruction of the ancients, but the lips closed, eager to teach in due time, but more eager to think and to do silently." Doubtless our state of life requires talking and acting. But let us aspire to act as do pious persons in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament when some needful matters must be attended to. Notice how they keep a reverent air, and speak as few words as possible, never turning their back on the Altar. So should we always and everywhere attend to our duties, never turning our back on the ever-present God.

What has silence to do with salvation?—a question of the active temperament. Very much indeed; for we read among our Savior's achievements in winning heaven for us: "Jesus held His peace, and answered nothing" (Mark xiv. 61). Just to be still! O, for the God-man that meant our salvation no less than the great Seven Words upon the cross.

Who ever heard of a man in plain course towards a happy death who did not put restraint upon his tongue? Aye, and provide for frequent spaces of silence amidst the hubbub of the noisiest occupations. Such a one will enjoy the silence of a week-day Mass as much as a miser does the music of gold coins. From the chatter of the street he slips gladly into the church for his silent visit with Jesus in the tabernacle. The insidious tendency to talk is to him a spendthrift tendency, and all his frugality of religious motive and zeal is dependent on his adherence to a rigid rule of occasional solitude. This gives a heavenly flavor to ordinary earthly affairs. A biographer of St. Peter Fourier says that his letters, even when about business matters, had the tone of being written between two meditations. You say such a man is dull company? Nay, he imparts not dullness but peace: peace and solidity of character are the fruit of association with him. The Psalmist says: "I set the Lord always in my sight, for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved" (Ps. xv. 8).

The very opposite trait is too often in evidence. Many, while occupied with spiritual things, as at prayer or in church, are preoccupied with thoughts about worldly affairs, and they feel little distress at their wanderings of mind. News and gossip jostle holy things in their musings quite instinctively. Few there are who, whatever may be their occupation of mind or body, are ever *pre*occupied with thoughts of God; and who are never quite at ease till both occupation and preoccupation are with God alone. This is called recollection, or, according to St. Teresa, "self-recollection." Is it surprising that heartfelt religion craves this inner retirement? Why should one want the company of men, when he can have that of God and His angels? The babble of talk, talk, talk wearies the nobler kind of characters. Of these does the prophet speak to the Holy Ghost: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy face, from the disturbance of men. Thou shalt protect them in Thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues" (Ps. xxx. 21).

Sometimes recollection is called the practice of the presence of God. Strange that it should take an effort to realize that God sees us. Nevertheless easily to do that is to be perfect. When Abraham sent his servant into Mesopotamia to get his son Isaac a wife, he said to him: "The Lord in Whose sight I walk will send His angel with thee, and will direct thy way" (Gen. xxiv. 40): "in Whose sight I walk," and sleep, and work, and live, to Whom all my thoughts lie open, and to Whom I always speak no matter to Whom else I direct my words. This spirit of the patriarch was his fullness of service according to God's previous command to him: "Walk before Me and be perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1). His walk is well guided who, as he steps onward, ever adverts to God. Such was the perfection of our patron, St. Joseph, when he journeyed into Egypt, having Mary and her divine Son ever before his eyes: "Who arose and took the Child and His Mother by night, and retired into Egypt" (Matt. ii. 14).

Only holy persons are thus recollected always. Others must now and then use the touch of the rein to remind their wayward thoughts who is master; we mean the use of devout aspirations. Many a one makes the sign of the cross when the clock strikes. St. Ignatius suggests lifting the hand to the heart when conscious of a rash judgment or any other defect. Some are led by the Holy Spirit to peaceful thoughts of Paradise at every moment of leisure. Light reading and light talk, the two notorious footpads on the road to prayer, in such a soul find little booty. The ordinary Christian joins in trifling conversation as a needful recreation. The more earnest Christian may also have this motive, but it is subordinate to his sense of justice as a provider of recreation for others, and he easily lapses into the holy relaxation of quiet prayer. In all our secular doings we should be like a home-loving man dining out; he is courteous enough to his friends, but he always feels that he is away from home, and looks to his return to God in solitude.

Retreats, as the name indicates, are seed beds of devout silence, even when one lives at home during the exercises, much rather when they are like the week's end retreats made in a religious house and under guidance of directors. During such a retirement one has leisure to shut the eyes of his body, and open those of his soul upon his interior life—his principles and his purposes, his destiny and his God. I have often wished that every single Christian might be given the precious privilege of spending a week yearly in the solitude and silence of a religious retreat.

If you would see deep down into the waters of a pond, the surface must be still. So with the study of the heart. If you would know plainly what your motives have been, stop still for a few days and look inwards. Blessed are you if the next time you make a mission you make it in this spirit. You may learn many things elsewhere. But in your own heart alone will you learn how your accounts stand with God. Work has its place. But its place and time is after solitude and prayer. The Pharisees labored strenuously "compassing sea and land" (Matt. xxiii. 15), both to do some things with energy and to hinder other things by force; if force and energy were needed to convert the world, they had enough and to spare. But Jesus goes quietly down to Nazareth, and is subject to Mary and Joseph for many long years in retirement almost absolute. After that, three years of alternating prayer and work and suffering were enough to redeem the world. Imitate Him in that, if thou wouldst do well: far better than the fierce onslaughts and noisy warfare of a zeal unmatured by patience and meditation and silence. Origen says of John the Baptist: "He went into the desert where the air was more pure, the heavens more open, and God more familiar, so that until the time of his preaching was come, he might employ himself in prayer in the company of angels."

A book! A companion whose goodness is always at our command, and whose silent eloquence is the more powerful because its pulpit is our own soul. A good book is the only company which does not intrude upon God's monopoly of inner conversation. To be content with a book alone is a token of a mind ready for the Holy Ghost. A good book is like a mill pond: placid in itself, but energizing all the machinery of the mill. All the activity of the day is sanctified by half an hour's reading in the New Testament or the Lives of the Saints in the early morning. The rosary! It is the humble guide of the soul during an occasional sojourn in the Spouse's "garden enclosed" (Cant. iv. 12), which is the happy lonesomeness of prayer.

II. St. Joseph.

Why is St. Joseph chosen Patron of the Universal Church? Because he was head of the household at Nazareth. The Head of the Church and of the world was in that household, Jesus, the Mediator and Redeemer of mankind; the Mother of the Word Incarnate was there, the glory of the Church, the ever Immaculate Virgin Mary; and of both of these St. Joseph was the head and protector. "The gifts and calling of God," says St. Paul, "are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). And although our Lord is God, and, having established His Church and confided to it the copious treasures of His love, sits now at the right hand of His Father, He is still the very same Jesus of Nazareth Who called St. Joseph father. He called him father, and obeyed him as the representative of His Father in heaven.

If, brethren, your glory is in being adopted children of God, is it not reasonable that you should venerate St.

Joseph as the adopted father of our Lord? Jesus is "the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29), which brethren all of us are; this means that the entire Church of Christ is but an extension of the Holy Family at Nazareth. Now we see the reason why St. Joseph is the Patron of the Universal Church. Those who belong to Jesus and to Mary must look to Joseph, as they did.

St. Paul, teaching that Abraham is the father of all the faithful, says that he is not so by race and blood, but by faith (Rom. ix. 7). St. Joseph was and is father of our Lord by the singular and ineffable process that has been called adoption, a very different thing from human adoption. Thus you and I are sons of God, participating in the divine nature (2 Peter i. 4) through the Only-begotten Son. But St. Joseph was not only united to the divinity as we are through the Son, but we may well suppose that in addition he had some way of union with God through the unbegotten Father, Who chose him as the representative of His divine Fatherhood. He stood as father to Him Whose Father is God. He was husband to her who was the spouse of the Holy Ghost.

How different this is from the error of many non-Catholics. They think St. Joseph was a mere makeshift; that God chose him to serve no higher purpose than to screen our Lady from odium, and to provide support for her and her divine Son: to be a sort of respectable serving-man. Well, this is of a piece with the view many of them have of the Blessed Virgin—that is to say, they regard her as the mere material instrument of the Incarnation. It is of a piece, again, with their view of God: a hard master and a stingy friend; He does not give much, and He hates to give that, and expects us to make it go as far as possible. How different is the truth! The truth shows us God taking the heart of man and filling it up with His flowers, pressing them down, shaking them together, till that heart overflows with love and happiness (Luke vi. 38). So when He selected Mary for His Mother He made her stainless, full of grace, and made her the prophet of her own glory through all generations (Luke i. 48). When He chose Joseph to be His father, He endowed him with exceptional graces and special gifts. When God invests a person with an office, He bestows upon him all the graces and all the dignity which the office calls for.

Brethren, St. Joseph is your father. Pray to him for chastity, for he was the guardian and husband of the chaste Mother of Jesus. Pray to him to establish you in prayer, for, great and noble as he was, he was a silent man and full of contemplation. Scripture tells of his deeds, but not of his words. Pray to him for the goods of this world, for all his clients have found him generous. He gives work to the unemployed, health to the sick. Pray to him for a peaceful household, for the Family of which he was the head was very peaceful and happy. Pray to him for a good death, for he died one. He died in Jesus' arms, with Mary kneeling at his bedside.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

I. Quarrelsomeness.

"And let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger. For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God."—*From this Day's Epistle.*

My brethren, St. Joseph was a model of all purity, a perfect man of prayer, a paragon of all self-denial. But when his great trial came, and his mind was assailed with suspicions about Mary, his espoused wife (Matt. i. 18-21), none of these virtues stood him in stead, but his gentle charity came to his rescue. He determined to leave her wholly to God, absolutely suppressed his indignation without in the least condemning her, acting against appearances in the interests of holy love, privately and without communicating his suspicions to anyone whatsoever. Therefore did God send an angel from heaven to reassure him and reward him. Not the anger of man advances God's cause, but the charity of his patient soul.

A yet more illustrious example is that of our Redeemer (Luke vii. 37-48), Who openly received the worship of a harlot at the Pharisee's banquet. The host was not the worst of his kind, and he seemed quite right in condemning our Lord in his own thoughts. Yet he did an evil thing in his soul, for he reprobated a poor sinner who had become a saint, and he inwardly blasphemed the Saint of saints for the loveliest trait in His character, kindness to sinners. Jesus fed His bodily hunger on the Pharisee's bread, but His hunger and thirst for immortal souls He fed on the banquet of the Magdalene's contrition: "And he said to her, many sins are forgiven thee." Are not these two instances of kind thought very moving? especially as in both of them appearances were against the use of kindness and in favor of justice. But not of God's justice, for man's anger does not work the justice of God, but only defeats its ends and mars its beauty.

The anger condemned by St. James in this day's epistle is willful anger. For who can blame me for angry feelings I cannot help and do not consent to? Am I to be reprobated because I have a bilious temperament, or a naturally irascible temper? There is a placid nature that never rebels because it never does anything; and on the contrary many a hasty word of revolt is followed by an equally hasty yet hearty obedience. "What think you?" asks our Lord: "A certain man had two sons; and coming to the first he said: Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. And he answering, said: I will not. But afterwards, being moved with repentance, he went. And coming to the other, he said in like manner. And he answering, said: I go, sir; and he went not. Which of the two did the father's will?" (Matt. xxi. 28-31.) Thus does the Lord condone the hastiness of mere irascibility as He condemns the pride of malignant anger. What our Savior dearly loves is described by St. Peter as "the incorruptible purity of a peaceable and quiet spirit" (1 Peter iii. 4). Purity and peace and gentle quiet are the blended colors which adorn a Christ-like spirit.

The Arians engaged one of their number to murder St. Gregory Nazianzen. But the wretch's heart failed him, and God's grace drove him to the Saint's feet to crave his forgiveness. The Saint said to him, " Your purpose to kill me has now made you mine. Only one thing I require of you. I beg of you to forsake your heresy, and sincerely give yourself to God." Thus does a true Christian feel towards an enemy as towards a bond servant: he owns his very soul; he must save it by his prayers, and by the more active charity of persuasion. How widely different is the policy of most Christians. If their grievance is just, that gives them the right not to save but to damn the soul of their enemy, and they act upon this monstrous delusion by word and deed, as if they were assassins in the pay of the evil one.

It is an old saying: " More princes are ruined by their own tongues than by the swords of their enemies." Most true of parents, teachers, employers, and others holding authority. Men mostly forget favors, never the fierce words of an angry superior. Listen to the advice of St. Paul, a man as notorious for his hasty temper as for the iron discipline of his self-control: " And be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God has forgiven you in Christ " (Eph. iv. 32). How sweet a picture of peace and mutual affection! And how touching is the motive! the remembrance of the all-loving tenderness of our Savior, Who being the foremost sufferer from our sins, would pardon us instantly; and as soon as pardoned would make us the kind and merciful friends of one another. Such a condition of mind is different from that of some who, the very hour of their return home from confession, will yield to angry feelings, and scold and threaten their family as if they had been rehearsing a part with the demon of wrath.

To bear the defects of our brethren without feeling any irritation is the virtue of a saint. To bear them without showing irritation is the duty of the ordinary Christian—not without a sure reward of merit, for it is hard. Especially does it chafe us when we have to live with one whose nature is opposite to our own. I am open (you might complain), and he is cautious and slow and calculating. But I answer that every day of your life with such a one is a day of manly exploit, in case you show no friction and shout out no impatient words. To suppress irritability, if you are little inclined to be irritable, is a little affair; but to the other kind of temperament it merits crowns in heaven, especially when done promptly, done uniformly, done in honor of our Lord's Passion, by Whose stripes we are healed; "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not; when He suffered, He threatened not; but delivered Himself up to him that judged Him unjustly" (1 Peter ii. 23, 24). Here are the grades of this lovely virtue: If I forgive injuries it is good; if I forgive and forget them it is better; if I forgive, and forget, and ignore, and become simply oblivious and unconscious of injuries, it is best of all.

Many are the excuses alleged for willful anger: I asserted my manhood; I only gave him what he gave me; he deserved it all; every word I said was perfect truth; I am always frank. Why not make a different boasting, and say in favor of kind words or kind silence: I safeguarded my manhood from bitterness; like my Savior treats me I gave him good for evil; every word I said was approved by Jesus Christ; I am always kind. Frankness is a virtue, but it is in need of two companion virtues to steady it on either side, namely, charity and discretion. Otherwise it is the trait of an unthinking mind. An old Jesuit Father, serving as chaplain of an insane asylum, once told us that a patient claimed to be dismissed because he was as sane as the superintendent. "For," he cried, "if you should be frank enough to speak out all your thoughts frankly as fast as they come up in your mind, would you not be considered insane and locked up here?" The superintendent laughed, and admitted that that was a very sane remark, and perfectly true. Does not angry frankness sometimes border on insanity?

The vice of anger is close joined to supreme wickedness of pride, for it takes a proud spirit to be deluded into the petty revenge or the mean bullying that is gratified by this spit-fire weakness, a spirit both proud and silly: Hence the Son of Sirach admonishes us: "Be not quickly angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool" (Eccles. vii. 10). Hence, again, the yielding, peaceful man is called meek, to whom our Lord promises even in this life the possession of the promised land of tranquil joy: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land" (Matt. v. 4). It is, indeed, like a little paradise to live in a family of even-tempered spirits. It is a sign of heavenly perfection to stop short in a fit of anger, held up by the thought of the Crucified. Many a soul shortens purgatory by curbing an angry tongue, or the counterpart of this—living happily with an angry wife or husband.

Often this hard earning of an immense reward is incident to the parental state. For how high a glory is the unflagging self-restraint of an irascible character ruling a house full of peevish children, during a score of fearful years, with scarcely an hour of peace—on the surface at least, though the deeper depths flow calmly on, whilst after every tumultuous day the Holy Ghost dictates to His wearied champion: "In peace in the selfsame I will sleep, and I will rest" (Ps. iv. 9). Of all the memories of early days, none is more holy and sweet than the anxious and *patient* mother of our childhood, and the tormented and *patient* father. Good parents will read their little deeds to paradise in the memory of their children. Herein is anger of use, for it is by such parents that the Scripture injunction is obeyed: "Be angry and sin not" (Eph. iv. 26); for correction must be both energetic with anger and gentle with love. The example of our Savior's anger in the temple is the standard of discipline over an unruly household. For though He seemed inflamed with indignation, yet did He cautiously make His "scourge of little cords" (John ii. 15) when He drove the buyers and sellers out of the holy place.

It is a mistake to be too easy with oneself in this matter. True, anger is a sin whose guilt is easily mitigated; and very rarely is it a mortal sin, for it is palliated justly by inadvertence, a defective character, delicate health, the need of administering correction. But on the other hand the *habit* of anger is always venially sinful, and sometimes so embitters and so scandalizes others that it borders close on mortal sin. Of many a one it is sadly said: Who can work with him? Who can work under him—or be set over him? Woe to the Christian whose mate in life can only be a saint of meekness. Woe to the family in which anger constantly clashes with anger. Of such a household speaks St. Paul in his outburst of warning: " Lest perhaps contentions, envyings, animosities, dissensions, detractions, whisperings, swellings, seditions be among you " (2 Cor. xii. 20).

" From all wrath and ill-will, O Lord deliver us! " is one of the petitions of the Church's greater Litany. Downright petition for heaven's pity upon his fuming and fretting soul is the sure antidote of this vice on the part of its victim. Humility in principle and practice, inasmuch as it breeds a lowly estimate of one's " rights," is a useful virtue for hot-headed Christians. A daily recitation of the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, or any other meditation on our Redeemer's Passion and Death, is a powerful sedative of ebulitions of temper. Asking pardon is a truly sovereign remedy. Thoughts of the silliness of stumbling at every little straw and snarling at every petty fault, help us to mend excessive sensitiveness, for we learn this truth of King Solomon: " A fool immediately showeth his anger, but he that dissembleth injuries is wise " (Prov. xii. 16). " A passionate man," says the *Imitation,* " turns every good into evil and easily believes evil. A good peaceable man turns all things into good " (Book II., ch. iii.). Is not this high Christian wisdom?

II. Confidence in God.

"For I know Whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12).

Words of hope are these, my brethren, very appropriate to this Easter season, when Jesus crucified has become Jesus risen and triumphant.

The beautiful virtue of hope is symbolized by a ship's anchor. The origin of this as well as its meaning, is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "That we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm" (Heb. vi. 18, 19).

Hope is a feeling of confidence, bordering on absolute certitude, that God has forgiven us our sins and will finally bring us to heaven. It is one of the three theological virtues, and its source is a divine inspiration; its motive is that the death of Jesus was offered to God for our salvation; its active force is maintained by the use of the sacraments of confession and communion and the practice of prayer.

Hope has this supreme dignity: it makes prayer efficacious, for it is another name for that faith which the Apostle St. James inculcates as the safe anchor against the waves of mistrustful doubt: "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind" (James i. 6). And in a hundred other places of Holy Writ, hope and faith are interchangeable terms for expressing solid trust in God.

Hope is the virtue of the present moment. I look back upon the past, and I am filled with shame. I look into the future, and I am filled with dread and trembling. I look at the present, and I rejoice with exceeding great joy. Here and now I have Jesus in Holy Mass, and in communion; I have His spirit in my prayers and in confession; I am never long without the company of devout Christians whose example, and, if I will, whose advice, urge me onward to perfect contrition for my sins of the past, and to living hope for my battle with future perils. Thus does the happy, hopeful present intervene between a shameful past and a menacing future.

The voice of the past is that a miracle shall be needed to save a man with a record like mine. Hope answers that any miracle may be expected when God is working for the salvation of His children. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts xxvi. 8) exclaims St. Paul.

When Blessed John of Avila was on his deathbed, a priest came to him to say that he was going to offer Mass for him, and asked him what Mass he would choose. He immediately said: "A votive Mass of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, for that is the foundation of all my hopes." When there is question of salvation, look for the inevitable and miraculous.

Hope counts on miracles. The Resurrection of Christ from the dead is the great mainstay of a dubious, misgiving mind always, but especially in the day of temptation.

Note well that Peter has closely to do with the Lord's Resurrection—himself a living miracle of Christ's loyalty to His disloyal follower. Peter was an outragious braggart, disgusting in his boastfulness. And then he showed himself the most paltry of cowards. Yet our Savior never lost confidence in him. "Go tell His disciples and Peter" (Mark xvi. 7), was the angel's command to Magdalen at the empty tomb; and as the news came, "Peter rising up ran to the sepulchre" (Luke xxiv. 12). This one-time braggart and craven Apostle is made the greatest Apostle among them all, and he is our rock of security and our pledge of perpetuity in the universal episcopate of his successors in the chair he set up at Rome.

Expect much from thieves and murderers, tried, convicted, and executed. For a thief was more faithful on Calvary than high priests, and more courageous than Apostles. And as to this spirit of Christian hopefulness, let us tell you that if the cause of God has need of many steady, plodding workers, it also has need of some divinely-guided dreamers and visionaries, men who are all hopeful in spite of every accumulation of misery; like the patriarch Abraham, "who against hope believed in hope, that he might be made the father of many nations" (Rom. iv. 18).

Thus the sense of degradation that comes from self-knowledge, calls for a quick glance at the anchor chain of hope fast and firm. We must call up an equal knowledge, and what is more, an equal acknowledgment of God's merciful, unalterable purpose to save us. In a state of profound disenchantment with self, nothing is so worthy of our hearts as bright hopes of future blessedness—a thought of Fénelon. St. Chrysostom, in one of his letters, says that dejection of spirit is "the worst of human evils." And this he wrote when he was in exile, wholly ruined, as it seemed, and utterly helpless, and foreboding all too truly his approaching death. He added that sadness "consumes the vigor of the soul, and impairs all of its faculties." How well he praised the very virtue he was most sorely in need of, and which he so conspicuously practised.

Adversity is the destruction of a puny character and the upbuilding of a strong one. It is like the distillation of some poisonous plant, which kills the suicide who uses it in despair, and saves from death a sufferer from disease, when administered by a skillful physician. God grant me a cheerful mind in affliction and a hopeful one under disappointment.

This virtue of hope is one that lends itself abundantly to fraternal charity. The prophet speaking of an ideal state of society says: "Every one shall help his neighbor, and shall say to his brother: Be of good courage" (Isaias xli. 6). Is not this a picture of a truly religious family?

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

I. Charity to the Poor.

"Religion, clean and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

It is as if to say: Do but keep clean from sin, and God thy Father will guide thee to all virtue through love of the poor. Brethren, let us consider the reason of the dignity of this virtue of helping the unfortunate, which our Savior in His prophecy of the last judgment puts forward as the sum and type of every other virtue (Matt. xxv. 34-40). It is because, whereas all men are His brethren, yet those who are orphans and widows, homeless and hungry, naked and in prison, have the least share of the good things of this divine family. And, therefore, they receive His tenderest sympathy; and are entitled to our superfluity. The rights of men are measured by the love of their heavenly Father; and the children's needs are the measure of the children's right. Hence Holy Church in the liturgy of Pentecost, salutes the Holy Ghost by special title as "Father of the Poor."

Do you believe this? I mean do you hold it to be a principle of "religion clean and undefiled," as well as a pious opinion, that you should help the poor? When you drop your nickels in the poor box, do you feel like paying a debt? St. John the Almoner was Archbishop of Alexandria, and when he was installed in his office, he directed a list of the poor to be drawn up; and he said: "These are my creditors." Surely, my brethren, this reverses the order of worldly economics, for the debtor class does not live in Wall Street. To that creditor class, the poor, none the less, our Redeemer belonged. And when He picked His favorites they "left all things" to follow Him" (Matt. xix. 27). Therefore when our Master says, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head" (Luke ix. 58), He speaks not only of Himself personally, but of Himself as Founder and Member of a state of life, and as the Pattern of a high Christian virtue. To that order of existence, a state of life which is a state of want, we all pay homage when we contribute to the collection for the orphans of our diocese, when we labor for the poor in the St. Vincent de Paul conference, when we carry out privately the corporal works of mercy, learned and recited by all in childhood, ignored and forgotten by many in after years: "To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick, to visit the captive, to bury the dead." Many of you, I am sure, are charitable. But which of you is charitable from a sense of justice? "Who is he, and we will praise him?" (Ecclus. xxxi. 9.)

To be a good Christian, with religious convictions "clean and undefiled," with a close observance of your duty to God and man, you must take in the love of those who are in want, and you must cherish a sincere desire to help them—take this in as one of your obligations.

Another consideration is this. Practical charity is a gatekeeper to the other grades of Catholic virtue. One of the earliest signs of the call of St. Francis of Assisi to heroic sanctity, was that his heart was one day melted with pity for a beggar. When he helped him, Francis was instantly stirred with an unknown, overwhelming desire to live precisely as Jesus Christ lived. The expression of that purpose, which soon transformed Christendom, was sympathy for our Savior; but Francis could not so much as think of our Savior, from that day on, without acclaiming Him as the poorest man in the world. Was it not so with all Christians at the first? when they "had all things in common. Their possessions and goods they sold and divided them to all, according as every one had need" (Acts ii. 44, 45). The "poorer class" was the only class among the pioneer Christians. Believe me, my brethren, such should be the case now, at least in feeling. Those first fruits of the

Gospel, those Israelite converts, did violence to their native character; for the Hebrew naturally longed for an independent living. Every family for itself and under its own vine and fig tree (4 Kings xviii. 31) was their standard of domestic happiness. Not so when they became followers of the Poor Man of Nazareth. Every man for his fellowmen, and every penny of his earnings for the common good. O beautiful beginning of our religion, whose undefiled purity of doctrine and practice is given by St. James—the bishop of that very Church in Jerusalem—as visiting the orphans and the widows in their tribulation, and avoiding as the taint and spot of a malignant fever the selfish principles and practice of the outside world concerning this life's good things.

This extends far and wide into the sentiments of the finer natures, namely, it embitters the enjoyment of the dwellings and luxuries and elegancies of the rich. This nobler spirit is thus voiced by Newman. Writing to a friend (*Letters,* vol. ii., p. 59), he says: "I confess I could not (I think) live in so beautiful a place. I should destroy the conservatory, and turn the inner drawing room into a chapel. *Natural* beauties I feel no grudge against; but artificial, whether exotic plants, foreign gems and marbles, rare viands, statues and paintings, seem as out of place as to be waited on by slaves. I think the principle of objection to both is the same." There speaks a great soul. But consider Jesus Christ's feelings about royal abodes, and how he prefers John the Baptist with his camel's hair tunic (Mark i. 6) to those who have "soft garments" and dwell "in the houses of kings" (Matt. xi. 8), whereas this prophet and angel of His coming wanders his whole lifetime in the wilderness, poorer than the poorest in all Israel. The only time our Redeemer ever was in a king's palace was when He was dragged and pushed and hooted into it: it was that of Herod (Luke xxiii. 6-12). Yet there have been saints among those who live in palaces. We may be sure that they there abode under compulsion of duty; and one and all they loved the homeless poor too much to enjoy the luxury of a palace. St. Louis of France, St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Elizabeth of Hungary were the foremost helpers of the poor in their kingdoms, and they and all such holy monarchs served the poor daily with their own hands, and felt all the nearer to the King of kings for enjoying that privilege.

There is little difficulty in parting with our money for charity's sake, if we consider God's Son as He lived in this world. He was Master of all riches. But when He came to save men from eternal misery He entered their company by being born in a stable, the Infant of a very indigent family. There must be something royal about charity to the poor, since the Infant Jesus was in dire need of it. Afterwards, when He lived at Nazareth, and increased "in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and man" (Luke ii. 52), He did not increase in worldly goods. He was known as a needy workman's son, and after Joseph's death as a country carpenter. Doubtless he was very thankful for a job of work, just as any man of that class is in our own day. Many is the poor man who is more grateful for work than for any gift whatsoever, and so was the Son of God in His time. And then notice how He lived a roving life whilst preaching His gospel, glad of a roof to shelter Him at night, grateful for His food, constantly returning to His exhortations to cherish the poor and to aid them. Finally, having been born miserably in a stable, He died disgracefully on the cross, naked and abandoned by all, His poor garments even gambled for by His executioners. I know not what "class" Jesus belongs to, if it be not the one whom at every turn we meet asking our charity—the poorer class.

It is a well-known fact that the best givers to poor people are their poor friends. The poor help one another because they are of the same class, and all in common feel the pinch of poverty—no effort of Christian faith is needed for a good act when necessity must be turned into a virtue, whether of patient suffering or of sympathy for another sufferer. The next best givers of charity are those who, though now they are rich, yet remember former days of penury. A dramatic instance of this was what happened some years ago at sunrise in City Hall Park, New York. A man with signs of wealth about him was seen marshalling the tramps together from their improvised couches of the grass or the benches, leading them to neighboring eating houses, and there paying for their breakfast. When asked about it he said: "When I was a poor young fellow I was for a while a tramp. I put in several cold nights in this very place, and I suffered from hunger. I then vowed to God that if ever I got rich, I would visit this place and help the poor wretches who were suffering as I had suffered."

Until one has weighed gold and the Gospel of Christ against each other, he knows little of either gold or the Gospel. St. Paulinus of Nola was one of the richest men in the Roman empire, and he possessed, besides, the full wealth of the learning of his time on economic subjects. But after he had added to his stores the wisdom of the Gospel, he thus stated his financial principle: "The chief use of gold and silver is in affording means to help the poor." Acting upon this He took our Savior at His word and sold all he possessed, and gave the money to the poor. Such principles and conduct no doubt blunt the edge of commercial enterprise, leaving only the sense of duty to one's family, and the love of industry as incentives to acquiring money. But who that observes present conditions of society even superfically, but would be glad to see the grindstone of holy wisdom play somewhat upon the over-sharp edge of the desire of money-getting nowadays? Yea, wisdom. For as of yore, so now do we need earnest admonitions against money getting and money hoarding and money wasting; according to the Wise Man: "I preferred her [wisdom] before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone: for all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand: and silver in respect of her shall be counted as clay" (Wisd. vii. 8).

In granting the greater indulgences, Holy Church suggests as a condition the giving of alms, associated, of course, with prayer and the sacraments. But too little attention is paid to this advice of our "pious mother." Therefore when next you go to confession, remember the teaching of God through the original Roman Pontiff that "Charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Peter iv. 8). And consider the elder Tobias, how whilst he rose from his dinner table, and the sweet company of wife and child, to visit the sick and bury the dead, an archangel cast the picture of the holy deed upon the vault of heaven before God's face. For Raphael said to him: "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and didst hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord......For alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting" (Tob. xii. 9-12). Blessed the man whose daily food is spiced with pitiful remembrance of the poor.

II. Prayer.

"Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

How strong is this promise, my brethren, and how generous; and how urgently does our Redeemer bear upon us to say our prayers fervently, and to cherish a solid confidence in their being heard. Prayer is rooted in the tendency of the mind upward to better things, taking God into account as the giver of all good gifts and the end of all progress. Therefore the ideal condition is the "pray always" (Luke xviii. 1) of our Redeemer, by which this tendency toward the eternal goodness becomes continuous and lifelong.

Prayer, most essentially understood, is this exchange between God and man. Man, under a divine attraction, gives himself to God without reserve, and from a motive of love. God then gives Himself to man, also without reserve, and from the same motive of love. Prayer exists because of God's infinite desire to give and man's inborn necessity to receive. Thus God is the author and term of every prayer. What God desires to give us is Himself, making man a partaker of the divine generation of the Son by the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

All virtues are practised in prayer. So teaches St. Chrysostom. This is because prayer is the atmosphere of love, the one supreme and universal virtue, and the inspiration of all others. Consider the relation of prayer to mortification. The practice of painful religious self-denial, when grown to be an ordinary and habitual condition, is essentially joined to interior familiarity with God. One without the other is not possible. Each demands the other, each procures the other.

The most perfect effect of prayer is not the keeping of good resolutions, but rather an interior condition which makes them easy to keep, namely, a heavenly yearning of the soul for God.

Considering God's part in this divine commerce between earth and heaven, we see it best on Calvary and in the Eucharist. Considering Thy love, O Jesus, what else couldst Thou give us but all? Considering Thy hunger and thirst, O Jesus, what else couldst Thou ask of us but all? What Jesus means by all is plain from the cross and the Mass and the communion. And what I must mean in returning all, is full love, shown by submission to Jesus in all things, and praise of Him in all things.

We smile in derision at some men who spend money and waste time in pilgrimages to distant shrines. Not that we deride pilgrimages, for they are good; but we find some souls just as bad after as before their holy journey. Yet we should be patient with them. For many find it easier to seek God in a journey half across the globe, than by half an hour's quiet searching for Him in His chosen shrine—our own hearts—by practising the prayer of recollection

Recollection need not always be advertence to God directly. Advertence to self for the honor of God is a true mode of holy retirement. "A man should never lose sight of himself," says Blessed Henry Suso, "lest nature should run away like an unruly horse." The same high authority says this: "Remain steadfastly in thyself until thou art drawn out of thyself without any act of thine." This home-loving habit is sure to win God for a guest, and that without long delay. Nor should one suppose that it is a do-nothing kind of habit; it but renounces the initiative of self for the initiative of God. This is experienced not only in divine attractions of love, but also in beginning and perfecting our outward undertakings. Souls practising this inner retirement soon learn that it is unwise to move in outer activity until one has distinguished whether it is God or nature that is actuating us.

How can we procure a taste for this sweet inward pilgrimaging toward God, which is the sober joy of the more elect souls? One who knew St. Clement Hofbauer well said of him: "His face positively beamed with sweetness and kindliness, but I never saw him laugh." How to procure it? All roads lead to Rome. Every virtuous word or thought or deed, greatly draws us inward to its fountain source—the indwelling Holy Spirit. Prayer of all kinds is the best means of recollection. And spiritual reading holds no second place even to prayer. St. Justin, philosopher and martyr, addressing the pagan Greeks, said that reading the Christian Scriptures stills one's passions and fills a soul with a blissful tranquility.

There are wise men and there are fools according to God. Who is the wise man? The one who appreciates what are the real ends of life, death, the judgment of God, and eternity, and prays accordingly. The fools are those who put pleasure in place of virtue as the end to be considered, the opinion of men instead of the judgment of God, and time instead of eternity. These can pray little.

We are like sailors cast adrift in an open boat without water, and who strive to slake their thirst with the salt water everywhere about them, only to add more fire to its torments. As they drink that water they only drink more thirst. So do we drink more spiritual thirst when we seek to satisfy our yearnings after peace and joy with the bitter waters of human happiness, and the transient enjoyments of this life.

Feeling within us our native longings for God, what a weakness it is to seek anything but Him. And when we do cast ourselves into the exercise of this glorious prerogative of prayer, we nevertheless too often desire to use it for its sensible and passing joys only.

Consider the need of prayer for making converts. Upon what does the success of our attempts to spread the truth depend? Absolutely on the blessing of God bestowed upon our efforts. Without that, all human ability, all human exertions, are nothing. Now we know how the blessing of God is obtained—by prayer, mortification, humility, obedience, all fructified by the graces of the sacraments. It is not brains, study, force of character, eloquence; no, it is much zeal and virtue and a little good sense, that make a success of any private apostolate, and these ever form the main element of a fruitful public apostolate.

Object, if you will, that very imperfect men, who are clever, do save souls. We do not deny this, though we call for instances in proof; they are found to be very few indeed. And in these exceptional cases God blesses the work without blessing the worker. Do you covet that relationship to God? Stupidity, as we are aware, is no bar to one's own salvation; and besides that, many a dull Christian has saved other men's souls, making converts not a few, the quickness of his heart quite making up for the slowness of his head. But we have yet to hear of cleverness being a valid claim to eternal beatitude for oneself, or an apostolic equipment in saving the souls of others.

An infidel bookseller may convert me to Christ by selling me a true book. He is my apostle by accident. By his incidental, his commercial apostolate, he gains not profit but a few pennies, and I gain an eternal weight of glory. Bear in mind the difference between a really apostolic man, and an incidentally or accidentally apostolic man.

A saint's original employment is prayer, which in its various forms is the study of God and of oneself. This rule is not only invariable, it is also exclusive in an extreme degree. If he engages in the work of saving men's souls, it is only because this original employment of personal holiness is accompanied by heavenly inspirations of zeal. As he is already a saint, so he now becomes a hero in convert making. In proportion to his progress in prayer, he succeeds in external active labors for other men's benefit. In this manner our Redeemer's love for men is constantly providing fit instruments for their salvation, and that in all orders of Christian life, from the Holy Father in Rome down to the humblest laborer in Christ's vineyard. Have you failed in your efforts? You think so. Be not too sure of that, as long as you are *quite* sure of an earnest endeavor to be a worthy Christian. The seed, you fancy has been thrown away on barren soil, may at a future time be given a better reception from the memory of your words than it has received at the actual speaking of them. And this will come about if you continue your prayers.

ASCENSION DAY.

I. Heaven.

"And while they gazed on Him going into heaven."—*From this Day's Epistle.*

Surely, my brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ took to heaven with Him His Apostles' hearts and souls. And this formed part of His joy. Next to the joy of being with them, was that of consciousness that their souls lovingly followed Him to His throne of everlasting bliss. He knew that scarcely anything but His glory could now engage their minds. Should it not be so with us? Shall not Jesus glorified be pleased if we can truthfully say with St. Paul: "Our conversation is in heaven?" (Phil. iii. 20.) The Apostle means by the word conversation our thoughts, resolutions, and longings, as well as our daily speech. Brethren, we talk of everything except heaven, the sweetest of all topics of conversation, for heaven is the final and perpetual union of our souls with God in the very perfection of all joy. And this blissful union with God shall include close association with Mary, the Mother of God, and all the saints and angels; also the delightful companionship of our beloved friends and relatives. This subject occupied much of our Savior's thoughts and speech while on earth. He began His great sermon on the Mount by telling of the heavenly reward of voluntary endurance of poverty: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3). And even when He threatened the wicked with eternal punishment in hell, He always promised the penitent the rewards of heaven. After His Resurrection, His principal topic with His disciples was how to win heaven—"appearing to them and speaking to them of the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3).

How delightful a thought is that of Paradise. When such things occupy our minds, the years fly by quickly enough. St. Teresa used to say: "It comforts me to hear the clock strike, for then I feel that I have drawn a little nearer to seeing God, since one hour more of my life is passed." Brethren, it is well to bear in mind how very personal is the promise of our Savior to give us everlasting happiness. For it is certain that Jesus died not only for all men in general, but for each one of us in particular. The whole wealth of His merits is mine; it is as if I alone occupied every thought of His sorrowful soul on Calvary. So that in heaven He is not only the joy of all the blessed in a general and common happiness, but He is all in all to each one in particular, is to be all His own divine self to you and me, taken apart from all others. He shall be mine as if He and all His Paradise were for me alone. Think of your joy when Jesus will speak to you as a man is wont to speak to his friend; nay, think of the Son of God living affectionately with you; think of your enjoying His company in daily intercourse. Thus does Jesus describe it:

"To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My throne; as also I have overcome and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Apoc. iii. 21).

What ails us, then, that we think so little and say so little about God's happy home in eternity? Why do we talk more about hell than heaven? Why do we serve God rather to escape everlasting torments than to enjoy everlasting happiness? Why is it that this poor perishing earth absorbs our affections rather than the glories of Paradise? Brethren, may God grant you all a deep longing for heaven, and a hearty love for the only means of going there, namely, keeping His commandments and receiving the sacraments of His Church. It behooves us often to meditate attentively on those ages of celestial bliss.

Brethren, the greatest deprivation of this life is that we cannot see God clearly, nor rightly feel His love. Hence the Apostle calls his existence here this body of death, and cries out to be delivered from it (Rom. vi. 24). Death, the sharpest of pains, if it be a good death, is the most precious boon we can receive, for it enables our soul to see God. Quickly or slowly cleansed in purgatory, the soul at last darts into the bosom of its loving Father, and instantly knows Him and loves Him divinely, having every love that can increase its joy. But that is not all. The soul knows and feels itself loved with God's own love, which is of so great an excellence that it is one of the Three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Ghost. Even now all true love of ours partakes of that divine Spirit. What was the most perfect love mortal ever had? Surely it was the love that Mary felt for her Divine Son, and the Angel Gabriel described the receiving of that love thus: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee" (Luke i. 35). Of course, no other created being shares that prerogative of Mary. But, nevertheless, for our own share we have the same Holy Spirit imparted to us, for in every sacrament from Baptism to the Last Anointing, God's Church says to us in effect: The Holy Ghost hath come upon thee. This gift of the Holy Spirit is furthermore renewed over and over again. The Third Divine Person is granted us at every prayer and almsdeed, and kind word, and charitable thought, and act of meekness or of patience. Yet here on earth all the divine reality of this is known, but in the obscurity of faith. We must constrain ourselves by our higher spiritual faculties to realize that a Christian life is a divine one. It is known as the indistinct forms of his loved ones are dimly seen by a man almost blind, or like the murmured tones of beloved voices in the ears of one but half awake. But in heaven the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit shall be upon us and in us in so perfect a manner as to give us God as God is, to be seen and known and loved as God only can be by means of His unstinted bestowal of Himself.

Let us hasten, then, to perfect ourselves for this glorious destiny. Our Redeemer is named in Scripture the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. xii. 2). The finishing touch of this divine Artist is seen in what has been called the second conversion, meaning the perfect conversion. This presupposes a soul long since resolved upon a holy life and already registering progress, but yet holding back from entire devotedness. In the second conversion a powerful supplementary grace is felt, by which a matured and final adjustment of all means of virtue to the one great end of life is effectuated. Speaking of this, Père Lallemant says that most of those who arrive at perfection undergo two conversions: "One by which they give themselves to the service of God; the other by which they devote themselves entirely to perfection."

My brethren, such a thought should be an inspiration to more and more energetic practice of virtue, keeping always in view the rewards of eternal life. Perhaps the clearest description of this mentality is that of St. Paul: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press toward the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 12-14). Despondency is in many cases the enemy. Let us remember that in all orders of life the best success is often gained after failures. To know how to succeed one must (oftentimes at least) learn how to bear the chagrin of defeat. In religious matters failure takes self-trust out of us. When a person at last feels compelled to fall back on God's pure bounty or perish everlastingly, he is not far from being saved. God is never a success with me till I am a total failure with myself, and am willing to own it. Only after the dark hours of a long night of disaster do we "launch out into the deep" (Luke v. 4) of God's love, wholly dependent on Him, nay, cheerfully reliant on His goodness. Towards this frame of mind the lessons of our Redeemer's Ascension into heaven are exceedingly helpful.

II. The Presence of God.

"And a cloud received Him out of their sight."—*From this Day's Epistle.*

My brethren, our Savior's passing behind the luminous cloud at His Ascension, was not any hindrance or any abridgment of His union with His disciples. For it only drew their hearts into deeper union with Him through His Holy Spirit; and a more spiritual one, as He Himself had instructed them: "It is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John xvi. 7). Faith and hope in Christ and especially love for Him, are fuller and happier when our life is drawn by the Holy Ghost into the hidden heart of God; as expressed by St. Paul: "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3).

The greater fullness of this divine union is known as recollection of spirit. Recollection is of two kinds, explicit and implicit. Explicit recollection is advertence of the soul to God's presence, or to His love for men, or it is any other elevating sentiment elicited by an effort, as by a devout habit of saying, whenever the clock strikes, "God's will be done." It is the fruit of a vigilant purpose to keep in touch with divine things. The other kind of recollection is advertence more diffused by feeling than punctuated by act. It is advertence to holy things by an underlying force; it is due rather to the assertiveness of grace than to a pious custom of our own. This spontaneous advertence to eternal truth and love is a divine fragrance always mingling its sweetness with the human activity of life, a fragrance drawn from a soul filled with God's thoughts the first instant it is released from attention to external occupations. Some souls are so divinized that the lightest touch of even human existence elicits a response from the divine life within them. This makes the soul the garden of Him Who says of Himself: "I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys" (Cant. ii. 1). This form of recollection instinctively uses the prayer of aspiration, which is thus inculcated by St. Francis de Sales: "Pray little and often, with frequent lifting of your soul to God; form good thoughts as you walk" (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 95).

How amazing the vocation of St. Paul, the first hermit, secluded from men and alone with God for ninety years. And how wonderful that exodus of so many thousands of men and women from the busy world into solitude, a movement of which he was the proto solitary. How extremely rare is such a calling in our day. Yet, any Christian may be totally alone with God, though living a busy life among men. A true servant of God often feels like a man of shy disposition belated amid the throngs of travelers at a railroad station. St. Peter would have us all feel so: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter ii. 11). A feeling of not-at-homeness is that of a religious heart when employed with the works or words or thoughts of the world. To be alone with God is to be happily alone. And even though we are elbowed by armies of worldlings, we may thus be alone, for recollection of soul makes a divine solitude of any environment.

Alone with God! What a privilege for mortal man. O God, be Thou by times my only company. And when Thy holy will calls me to men's company, let it be to teach them the joy of knowing Thee alone, of receiving all things from Thee alone, and of referring all things to Thee alone. Among the revelations of our Savior to the Venerable Sister Mary of the Divine Heart was this: "My desire has been to establish the worship of My divine heart. This external adoration having now been spread everywhere, I wish that the interior worship should be more and more introduced. I desire that souls should acquire the habit of uniting themselves more and more to Me interiorly, offering Me their hearts as My dwelling place."

How sensible is the presence of God when we enter a church; its silence is the speech of God; its walls are His praise; its altar is His throne. To how many noble souls is a church the outward gate of an inner heaven. Its richest gift is the decoration of their souls with its divine memorials, the better to make good the Apostle's words: "You are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. vi. 16). If the edifice which is the throne room of the Eucharistic God is my soul's temple because it is everybody's, shall not my soul be a temple of God all my own, my private chapel of the all-holy and all-loving God? Secreted in the remoter chamber of my heart of hearts I trim the lamp of faith in God, I adorn my altar of sacrificial love. One may not always be in a church, or even near to one, but he may nearly always be alone with God within himself. How many times did not our Savior pray in company with His Apostles and with great multitudes in God's temple at Jerusalem, and how carefully He taught us how to pray common prayers together. But again He taught: "When thou prayest, go into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret" (Matt. vi. 6). This applies, of course, to every sort of spiritual exercise that is solitary, especially to meditation. But when our Lord says "shut the door," He inculcates recollection. Solitariness is the cloister of the heart. To be shut up with God is the holiest state of mundane existence: the loneliest to a servant of the world, the best peopled to a servant of heaven. And this seclusion is easily had in spite of distracting occupations. "I am surrounded by people, and yet my heart is solitary," wrote St. Francis de Sales to a friend.

A recollected man is one whose ordinary state of mind ever has some degree of advertence to God. If I journey to Washington to assist at the inauguration of a President, some private matters may occupy my mind; but I am preoccupied with thoughts of the great event about to happen. Thus should it be in the spiritual life; no matter what other matters occupy me, I must be preoccupied with the one great thought, God: the sovereign and all-loving God, always and everywhere present, always supreme. Minded to do this thing or that, I must have a tendency to be absent-minded with thinking of God.

King Solomon says: "The heart of a wise man is in his right hand, and the heart of a fool is in his left hand" (Eccles. x. 2). The wisdom and strength of your right hand is from a heart mindful of God, and the silliness and the cowardice of your left hand is from a heart thoughtful of the world. So says the Psalmist: "I set the Lord always in my sight. He is at my right hand, that I be not moved" (Ps. xv. 8). Attention to God exclusively involves unbroken contemplation. But how rare a gift is this. Attention to God at short intervals is the best substitute for contemplation, and is not a rare but a widely-spread vocation. A pianist plays the tune with his right hand and the harmony with his left, one and the same musician playing a different set of notes with different hands, and with one and the same musical effect. So whilst my mind's right hand touches the heavenly chords of love within my soul, my left hand makes true harmony for this divine music, attuning to it my outward work of zeal for souls, or the simple tasks of family life, or the plaintive sorrows of sickness and trouble.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

I. Confidence in God.

"And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God."—*From this Day's Gospel.*

MINGLED joy and sadness filled the souls of our Savior's Mother and disciples when He bade them farewell, and gathered them about Him for His Ascension. How lovingly did He embrace them—as we well know He did, though the all too-brief narrative lacks such details. On their part they said one to another: He is about journeying to the skies, and we must soon journey into the whole world—let us kiss the marks of His wounds, let us gaze for the last time upon that well-loved face, and listen to that voice whose marvelous tones none of us shall hear again till after our martyrdom. And when He had blessed them and said farewell, He rose into the air, and presently a bright cloud hid Him from their gaze. Jesus is gone to heaven!

And as angels announced His coming at Bethlehem, so did they now appear to and soothe the minds of His followers at His departing. "And while they were beholding Him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments. Who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus Who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts i. 9-11). He will return to earth again in this same magnificence to judge the living and the dead at the end of the world; such is the message of the angels. But, my brethren, we know that although the Apostles thus were deprived of His presence, yet Jesus was not deprived of theirs, for His love always kept them close to His heart. And, furthermore, His humanity was so spiritualized by His Resurrection that His bodily presence might at any instant follow His soul's thoughts of love. And did He not provide for His constant dwelling among us in the Eucharist? In the ancient law the priest of Jehovah wore twelve sacred jewels upon his vestment, "and the twelve stones were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel" (Exod. xxxix. 14). When he offered victims upon the altar, these names of God's elect shone out brightly in the light of the sacrificial fires. So did our Redeemer write our names on His very heart, which is the book spoken of by His prophet: "And in Thy book all shall be written" (Ps. cxxxviii. 16). There shine brightly all our names, resplendent with the light of the infinite deity, as our High Priest "maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 34) with His Father.

St. Paul so loved his converts that he felt them to be inscribed upon his very heart, as he writes: "You are in our hearts, to die together, and to live together" (2 Cor. vii. 3). Now if the love of one man for other men can be so intense, what shall be the love of the God-man for those for whom He died, that they might live together with Him forever in the heavens? It shall be your privilege, my brethren, to appeal to that immortal record of love, the divine Heart of Jesus, when the perilous hour of your departure shall be announced to you. Among the petitions of our mother the Church in the litany for the dying, is one made to Jesus to deliver the departing soul from an evil death through the glory of His "wonderful Ascension." Everyone of us is predestined to eternal glory if he will but love Jesus well enough to keep His commandments. And to each and all of us does He solemnly pledge His word concerning His Ascension: "I have said to you, that I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2). The entrance of Jesus into heaven is that of the first-born of our family, the prince-royal of our ennobled race, the claimant of His and our birthright, purchased by so dear a price as His life's blood. Here then is light to a soul saddened by the mists of doubt; here is rest for an anxious, troubled, belated spirit, joy to a melancholy one. The happy lessons of our feast are also and especially comforting to those who are dulled and depressed by old age, or by an illness which surely means the approach of death. Such conditions call for an increase of solace from on high. It is granted through meditating on Christ's glorious entrance into Paradise. There He goes into His bright cloud, your offering to the Father, your Ambassador bearing your gifts of love and hope and loyal faith. And immediately will you feel the answer of the Holy Ghost, just as did the aged Simeon, that you shall not see death till you have seen the Christ of the Lord (Luke ii. 26), for if you have Simeon's trustfulness, you shall see Him in the visions of your spirit at the right hand of God, beckoning to you to stand fast in hope and be strengthened.

Once we heard a dear friend of ours, who was an old man, at that time persecuted by his relatives, use the following words: "If I am thrown out of the family, and even should it be for a just cause, yet some institution or other may take me in and give me food and shelter till I die." And then with deep emotion he added: "But when all else fails Jesus is my friend, faithful and true; He will give me immortal food and shelter in heaven. He has a home for me there." My brethren, it is well enough to rejoice in the Lord, and do it always (Phil. iv. 4) as the Apostle exhorts. But can you really do it in your time of sickness, in the sadness of old age, in the dark hours of adversity? You will be the better able to do so if you make much of the teachings of such festivals as our Lord's Ascension. Here is a species of love which casts out fears and forebodings almost completely—a boon of priceless worth. Fear of God is salutary; but it is a sentiment dangerously near hate. Every demon in hell fears God—and hates Him. Love is far removed from hate: to one who loves Him it seems incredible and impossible that anyone can hate God. Not so to one who fears Him with no admixture of love. Have but a loving heart, and the Ascension of Jesus is a perfect cure for all despondency.

Mark, my brethren, that the white-robed angels foretell that the Lord's coming at the day of judgment shall be similar to His departure at the Ascension. This surely tells us of His own immense joy at again gladdening us with His return. What a comfort this is to despondent mortals. The blessing of Jesus bestowed on us at the Ascension shall even be exceeded in affection by that given at His second coming, when we "shall be taken up together......in the clouds, to meet Christ, into the air, and so shall we be always with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 16). The joys of the Ascension do but foreshadow those of the judgment, if we will only cultivate the love of Christ, origin and life, as He is, of all joy. Listen to St. Francis de Sales, writing to a dear friend much distressed at the memory of his former wickedness: "But, sir, I must speak a little with you, heart to heart, and tell you that whoever has a true desire to serve our Lord and to avoid sin, ought not at all to disquiet himself with the thought of death or of the divine judgments. Although both are to be feared, still the fear should not be of that terrible and terrifying nature which beats down and depresses the vigor and strength of the soul, but should be a fear so mixed with confidence in the goodness of God as by this means to become gentle" (*Letters to Persons in the World*, Mackey, p. 206).

In our Lord's Ascension we see the union of earth with heaven. For all the souls of the just who had died previously are now invisibly ranged about Him, Who, having broken asunder the bars of death, is about to open to them the gates of immortality. Many choirs of the angels were with them, a heavenly escort of their monarch in His triumph. Amazement and inexpressible joy filled the hearts of the Apostles, who felt the beginnings of that change from the earthly to the heavenly which should be consummated at Pentecost by the coming of the Holy Ghost. Never before had they so clearly known that His glory was their own. They felt the meaning of the Psalmist's words: "Sing ye to God, sing a psalm to His name, making a way for Him Who ascendeth upon the west: the Lord is His name. Rejoice ye before Him" (Ps. lxvii. 5, 6). So should we, my brethren, rejoice with our Savior in the glory of His Ascension, as we have so plentifully profited by the shame of His Crucifixion.

And we should join with the Apostles in their heartfelt longing to follow Him, saying to our Lord the divine words of the prophet, so often repeated in the Church's liturgy of this feast and its octave: "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive" (Ps. lxvii. 19). Thou, O Jesus, art the beloved of our hearts, and we are the beloved of Thy heart because Thou hast redeemed us. And whithersoever Thou goest we must follow after Thee, for it is the right of love to claim a share of all things possessed by the beloved. Thou hast made my heart the captive of Thy love, and as Thou this day "makest the clouds Thy chariot, and walkest upon the wings of the wind" (Ps. ciii. 3), my very soul quits the earth, in desire at least, to enjoy Thy own bliss in heaven. Let this aspiration towards a divine life with Thee become the main motive of my activity in Thy service, the principal sweetness of my prayers to Thee. And if ever it happens that my mind is obscured by temptation, let it be like the cloud that hid Thee from the eyes of Thy devoted followers, out of which came two bright angels, messengers of hope, faithfully promising that Thy glory, hidden for a while, should again be restored.

After our Savior had washed His disciples' feet the night before He suffered, He read their hearts to them. "Whither I go you cannot come," He said; and He added: "If I go I shall prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and will take you to Myself, that where I am, you also may be" (John xiii. 33; xiv. 3). Sweet words: We shall meet again. As the Lord went to His Passion and Death, He said to His disciples in effect: We shall meet again. As He ascends to His glory it is the same, many times repeated by Him, and finally by His angels: "This Jesus Who is now taken up to heaven, shall come again." Then the Apostles adored His footsteps, the last earthly traces of their beloved Master: "And adoring, they went back into Jerusalem with great joy." He was gone, but His promises filled their souls with courage. In patient but happy expectancy they awaited the coming of His Holy Spirit. Such is your mind, I trust, my brethren. And remember that Holy Church has set apart the days between now and Pentecost for the Novena of the Holy Spirit. Follow its spiritual exercises with great fervor, and be sure that the Paraclete when He comes will complete the happiness of this day's devotions.

II. Brotherly Love.

"But before all things, have a constant mutual charity among yourselves; for charity covereth a multitude of sins."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

Our Savior teaches that loving our neighbor is like loving God (Luke x. 27); and our own experience proves that our neighbor loving us is like God loving us—so sweet and welcome is it; for he is God's deputy in offices of love, and God uses him to lead us to Himself. And now our Apostle St. Peter, following our Savior's teaching in the Our Father, adds that loving our neighbor is a token that God has forgiven us our sins, or that He is surely getting ready to do so—yea, though we should be guilty of a multitude of them. Could further praise be given to any virtue? And yet we must add this other praise: brotherly love is its own reward; it pays us high recompense in those gentle and consoling feelings of friendship of which it is so fruitful.

St. Peter in this text speaks both by inspiration and from experience, for he was the head of the little brotherhood which God's love gathered together after Pentecost—the Christian Church in Jerusalem. The characteristic trait of that apostolic community, made up as it was of men and women of all orders and conditions, married and single, clergy and laity, was that "they had but one heart and one soul." After saying that of them, and as a natural consequence the sacred writer adds that they possessed "all things in common" (Acts iv. 30-32). Could there be a better atmosphere for divine love to breathe than such loving self-forgetfulness? St. Teresa considers the practice of brotherly love as a great share of all we have to do to attain to the highest flights of prayer. In treating of the absorption of the soul in God by what is called the prayer of union, she says: "If you possess fraternal charity, I assure you that you will certainly attain the union I have described. ......Beg our Lord to grant you perfect love for your neighbor and leave the rest to Him" (*Interior Castle,* V. Mansions, ch. iii.). Many a one is stalled in the deep rut of selfishness; thinking meanwhile that the distractions troubling him at his prayers are due to his many external occupations. He should know that they are due to his meanness, or to his snappish temper in his family life. Or perhaps he is tormented by his sensual tendencies, because he is of an unforgiving temper. Our Lord illustrates this in His parable of the servant who was cruel and unforgiving towards his fellow-servant, and who was therefore delivered to the torturers; and He adds: "So shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" (Matt. xviii. 34, 35). On the last words rests the divine emphasis—hearty forgiveness. It is vain to offer your heart to God even by daily communion, if meanwhile you hold it back from your neighbor who has done you an injury—offering him forgiveness of the lips only. It sounds curious but it is true: God is as jealous of having you love your enemy as He is of having you love Himself. Is it not strange that these two loves are in God's eyes as like each other as two twins? (Luke x. 27.) And this is backed by an argument of the beloved disciple: "If a man loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not?" (1 John iv. 20.) It is also to be remarked that when our Savior had ended teaching us His prayer, the Our Father, He commented on only one part of it, that which couples God's pardon of us with our pardon of our trespassers: "For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you" (Matt. vi. 14, 15).

Much of our brotherly love is to be shown in our conversation; the family circle is the divine arena of this noble virtue. Would that all were fully alive to King Solomon's teaching: "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but a hard word provoketh fury" (Prov. xv. 1). It is plain sailing when we all happen to be in an amiable mood; but in the stormy seas of irritation and discontent, trimming the sails of family talk is a work of danger—and of great merit. Says Thomas à Kempis: "It is no great thing to be able to converse with them that are good and meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all. And everyone would willingly have peace, and love those best that agree with them. But to live peaceably with those that are harsh and perverse, or disorderly, or such as oppose us, is a great grace, and a highly commendable and manly exploit" (*Imitation,* Book III., ch. iii.).

Let us give this a missionary application. We read of men and women who, for love of Christ, find their greatest joy in serving loathsome lepers. What heroes they are! Now there are among my acquaintances souls covered with the deadly leprosy of error and vice. How is it that I cannot get myself to spend an occasional half-hour in helping these poor creatures to recover their spiritual health? It is a greater boon to Christ's heart to deliver a bigoted non-Catholic from his loathsome prejudices than to nurse a leper back to sound health.

PENTECOST SUNDAY.

I. The Holy Spirit.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

We are not to suppose, my brethren, that the divine Spirit was granted only to those chosen one hundred and twenty souls, or to their successors in the sacred priesthood and episcopate. No, but to all who have been regenerated in holy Baptism, and who have retained their first innocence; or if they have lost it by mortal sin, have recovered it again by sincere repentance and the grace of absolution in the sacrament of Penance. God the Holy Ghost—it is Pope Leo XIII. who is teaching us—"resides by grace in a just soul as in a temple, in a most intimate and peculiar manner. From this proceeds that union of affection by which the soul adheres most closely to God. more closely than the friend is united to his most loving and beloved friend; and thus he enjoys God in all fullness and sweetness" (*Encyclical on the Holy Ghost,* Pentecost, 1897).

The activity of this divine Guest, as Holy Church calls Him, is exerted in saving us from evil and guiding us to good. Compare Him to one using a slate, whose action is always two-handed, namely, cleansing and writing. With the left hand, as it were, our indwelling God is ever cleansing the soul of all self-seeking, and self-indulgence, and self-conceit, and uncharity to our neighbor—just as one would clean a slate does He wipe out our sinfulness. And then with the right hand, this Finger of God, as He is saluted in this day's liturgy, is ever writing His divine messages to us. Sometimes it is strong hatred of sin; again, powerful love of virtue; sometimes it is just simply the love of God with which He "presseth us" (2 Cor. v. 14); and again a devouring sympathy with Jesus Crucified for our sins, leading quickly to zealous coöperation with Him in saving sinners. The left hand (to pursue our illustration) gives humiliation, and self-effacement and purification from our faults, while the right hand of God gives us directly and immediately every variety of love for God and man within our souls. Let us but join God's inner and outer guidance into one single rule of life, and then all that God teaches us outwardly through His Church and her ministry, all that our devout friends impart of their goodness and truth in God's name, will be illuminated with a divine inner light. Goffine, in his *Explanations of the Epistles and Gospels* (Septuagesima Sunday), expresses this integral union of the outward and inward influence of God in the following question and answer: "How does God call people? By inward inspirations, by preachers, confessors, spiritual books, and conversations, etc. He thus calls them in the days of their blooming youth, and He continues to do so even till advanced age." This is yet better expressed in one of the prayers appended to the Litany of the Saints: "Prompt, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our actions by Thy inspirations, and further them by Thy gracious help; that every prayer and work of ours may always begin from Thee, and by Thee be happily ended." The grace of God is needed to begin and to carry forward and to end every heaven-winning work or thought or word. That grace is to be attributed to the immediate influence of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Full appreciation of this—does it not elevate a good life into something truly divine?

Some Christians think that the cultivation of the sense of being guided interiorly by the Spirit of God concerns only high proficients in spirituality. Such is not the case, although to souls earnestly bent on perfection is granted an unusually clear perception of God's secret leadings. But the newly-repentant sinner has far more critical need of it, and to him it is given with perfect plainness. He must rightly understand that the reproaches of his conscience are the "unutterable groanings" of the Holy Ghost (Rom. viii. 26). It is in the earliest steps of a soul from darkness into light that the touch of the divine hand is most needed. Sinners need God's guidance more than Saints, the newly-repentant more than the ripened spirit. The penitent's remorse—would that all were aware of it!—is the most adorable voice of God, mingling with his act of contrition divine reproaches and exhortations, warnings and heartenings. A soul sensitive to the deeper influences of life learns to recognize this holy interior word of God, which soon becomes living and effectual to it, "more piercing than any two-edged sword, reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit" (Heb. iv. 12). Would that every penitent realized that he is now intimately dealing with God Himself, that his agonizing sorrow is the effect of the tender remonstrance of his soul's divine Spouse, that his iron resolve to avoid dangerous occasions of sin is a true inspiration from on high. If he thus could feel, would not his self-distrust be more intelligent, more watchful? Would not his confidence be like that of St. Paul, who was himself a true penitent, and who exclaimed: "I know Whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him" (2 Tim. i. 12). We meet with men whose repentance is but superficial even with confession and communion, because they deal with these sacraments only superficially, that is to say with their outwardness rather than with their inwardness, which is the living God Himself. We meet with other men whose lives once abominable with every kind and degree of vice, have been radically changed by the first reception of the sacraments of Penance and Communion for many years. It is because they made their confession and communion, wholly conscious of changing from Satan's leadership to that of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. God seeks to communicate Himself to all; but to no one does He so vehemently and peremptorily address Himself as to a soul whose need is not perfection but salvation. The result to a receptive soul is decisive. To a man who gives himself up to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, there seems to be no possible life but one of virtue, just as to a vicious man there seems to be no possible life but one of self-indulgence.

A holy writer has compared the different ways of receiving divine grace to the conduct of sick persons in taking their medicine. One says: "Doctor, I took your medicine"—meaning I took it in my hand—"I put it to my mouth and I drank it." Another says the same words to the doctor—"I took your medicine." But he means that he took it in his hand, put it to his mouth, sipped a few drops, and, finding it bitter, set it down again. Yet another took the medicine in his hand, looked at it, smelt it, and set it down untasted. Apply this example to the variety of sick souls asking God for the cure of their sinful maladies. Some draw His holy remedies, the sacraments, into their deepest souls; and these are radically cured, for God the Holy Ghost has gained full control over them. Others timidly and half-heartedly just touch and taste and then stop; and these are cured only on the surface. Others again go through the holy movements and utter the holy words of the sacraments mechanically, and although they commit no sacrilege, for they mean none, yet are they not even superficially cured of their sinfulness. De Ponte, who calls the indwelling Spirit our "Living Law," voices the happiness of serving Him in the following beautiful language: "O happy souls, who have the Spirit of God for your associate and companion! O divine Spirit, since Thou breathest where Thou wilt (John iii. 8) because Thou art essentially God, show Thy goodness to me willingly according to Thy power, frequently instructing me what to think, speak, and do, that being moved by Thee, I may become in all things like Thee. Amen" (*Meditation* xxvi., pt. 2).

This deep experience of God's indwelling has essentially to do with Catholic faith, being the sure safeguard of its stability, in time of trial especially. Lucianus was a distinguished martyr in the last general persecution. In a speech he made before the Emperor Maximin, he said: "The God Whom we Christians worship is one God, Who was preached to us by Christ, and Who is breathed into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We are not, as you suppose, the victims of some erroneous human persuasion, nor are we, as others are, the blind followers of an ancestral tradition, which has never been submitted to criticism. Our authority for what we believe about God is God Himself. Such great and transcendent conceptions could never have entered into the thoughts of men, if they had not been brought home to us by the power of His own Spirit, and revealed by the teaching of His own word and wisdom."

St. Paul bids us to "walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 4), and this is a daily and a most practical guidance—walking. It is effectual for faith, as we have seen, which lights up our whole way of life with God's bright truths about time and eternity, sin and virtue. It is generative of a life of hope, causing us ardently to aspire to an invisible and a remote yet most certain reward of virtue. The guidance of the Spirit is especially the bestowal of charity, by which we have a love of God such as Christ had for His Father, a virtue entirely above our natural capability of love; and to which is added Christ-like sympathetic affection for our neighbor, essentially superior to our native powers of loving—an affection pure, solid, unchangeable, fixed in the all-loving heart of God Himself. Now it is in this inner way of the grace of the Spirit, and this way alone, that we are both saved and sanctified. For it is to the newly-repentant no less than to the well-proven friends of God, that the same Apostle applies his famous test of divine sonship: "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14).

Father Hecker quoted with emphatic approval Lallemant's saying: "All creatures that are in the world, the whole order of nature, as well as that of grace, and all the leadings of Providence, have been so disposed as to remove from our souls whatever is contrary to God" (*Spiritual Doctrine,* III., Principle, ch. i.). Foremost in this work of preparation, whose fullness elicits the Psalmist's cry: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!" (Ps. cvii. 2) are the sacraments of Holy Church, which not only prepare us for God, but bestow Him upon us.

Ever and always we are inspired to cry out for God: "Come, Holy Ghost!" Is it not wonderful that we ask God for God? Does it not seem rash to ask Him to give us Himself? Yet if we ask for less than God we do not ask enough. Nothing less than God suffices man. God is alone enough. Anything less than Himself God desires not to give us. Hence our Savior's promise to His Apostles before His departure from them: "I will send you the Holy Ghost." And He also said that He would give them the Father as He had been Himself given to them by the Father: "If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love Him; and We will come to him, and make Our abode with Him" (John xiv. 23). How different does religion become when the indwelling Spirit, the Spouse of your soul, stimulates us actually to regard God the Father as *our* Father, the divine Son as *our* Brother. Then does the interior life of man become in a true way the life of God, as the Apostle teaches: "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). It is towards this condition that the Church points us in that petition of the Litany of the Saints: "That Thou wouldst lift up our minds to heavenly desires: We beseech Thee to hear us!" This doctrine is by no means conducive to pride, as some would suspect. The more we walk in God's conscious presence the less capable are we of self-conceit. The thought of God!—it is a perfect antidote of pride. Father Faber sings:

"Within a thought so great, our souls
  Little and modest grow,
And, by its vastness awed, we learn
  The art of walking slow."—(Hymn, *The Thought of God*).

A self-willed friend wrote St. Francis de Sales, claiming that he was guided by the Holy Ghost. He answered: "The effect of inspirations is humble, sweet, tranquil, and holy. How then can your inclination be an inspiration, when it is so ill-tempered, hard, sullen, and disturbed."

II. The Easter Duty.

You know, my brethren, that next Sunday is the last day on which the obligation of yearly communion may be fulfilled, the time fixed by Holy Church being that between the first Sunday of Lent and Trinity Sunday. You also know how grave is this law; for its violation makes one subject to excommunication, and to exclusion from Christian burial after death.

Careless Catholics palliate the guilt of neglecting their Easter duty by saying that it is only a law of the Church. But this is not true, for our Redeemer undoubtedly requires the reception of this supreme sacrament of His love at certain intervals, and authorizes His Church exactly to name and fix them. Anyway, the Church is His Church, and her laws have His guarantee. Another excuse—if not openly offered, yet secretly cherished—is that this is only a sin of omission. The sinner says to himself: "I have not committed adultery, nor got drunk, nor robbed anybody." But consider that it is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord that is passed by and set aside: refusing Holy Communion is a direct insult to Jesus Christ, Who offers it. Take an illustration. Imagine a son refusing to speak to his father; coming in and going out every day without answering his father's salutations, without so much as a sign of recognition, meanwhile eating and drinking and clothed and living at home at his father's cost; enjoying among men his father's name and station: and all the time simply ignoring him, coolly refusing him the commonest civilities. If his father speaks to him, he turns his back and makes no answer. At table he speaks to everyone except to his father. Now suppose such a one justifies this outrageous behavior to his injured parent by saying to him: "What have I done? I never struck you, nor spit in your face, nor called you names, nor stole your money—what have I done?" Brethren, such language would only reveal a deeper depth of baseness. His crime is exactly what he has *failed* to do; and now he shows that he has not feeling enough to perceive the awful wickedness of such conduct.

Well, then, remember that Jesus Christ, Who offers Himself to the Christian in Holy Communion, is the eternal God Who created him out of nothing, the God-man Who died to redeem him, Who has instituted this sacrament for him, and in it bestows His own very self upon him. And now He is met with downright refusal. Tell me, could a Catholic do a worse thing against God than neglect his Easter duty?

Other sins may be excused, or at least explained in various ways, as either by a sudden storm of passion, or slavery to a rooted habit of sensual indulgence, or, again, lack of religious instruction. But for a well-trained Catholic simply to stand passive and indifferent when God offers him His own divine Self, is a crime ranking among the highest. Missing the Easter Communion is an act of the purest pride (the root of every sin). It is deliberately thrusting aside and rejecting a gift that is the Crucified Savior's own Self. We are repeating this over and over again, because careless Catholics delude themselves with thinking that it is but the omission of a certain outward formality of religious observance.

Besides all this, failure of the yearly communion is a sin of scandal, for it is a public sign of lapse from practical Catholicity. How much does that Catholic care for Catholicity who willfully neglects to show what is by its very nature, as well as by special appointment, the outward sign of membership in the Church? This neglect, therefore, instantly becomes a subject of remark in such a man's family and among his Catholic acquaintances. To his priest it is cause of much pain. Everyone asks himself: What is the matter with the miserable man? Perhaps he is guilty of some secret crime, they surmise; or he is entangled in some dishonest business affair; involved in the deadly occasions of certain sins or in their fatal consequences; perhaps he has joined some forbidden society; even he may have lost his faith; anyway (many will so think) the root of the difficulty is that he is so bad that he dare not go to confession.

All will agree that at best he is a poor-souled Catholic, half-hearted and shamefaced.

My brethren, we began by reminding you of the penalty of excommunication which hangs suspended over such a man's head. But there is no suspension of that dread penalty on the part of his friends. They excommunicate him in their own minds. And they mourn him as one who has excommunicated himself. They pray for him as for one whose state is desperate, whose chances of salvation are remote, and are likely to become worse than remote as time goes on.

But, brethren, consider yet more closely God's side of this matter of the Easter duty. Holy Communion is the covenant of His love, according to our Savior's words: "As the living Father hath sent me, and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi. 58). In it with unspeakable affection and joy He renews all His promises. It is the embrace of Jesus Christ, the pouring of His divine love direct into our soul. Holy Communion is the fullness of the divine purpose in creation and in baptism; it is the final triumph of divine love. Ah, my brethren, these dull words but feebly show the worth of this sacrament to the Sacred Heart of the Son of God. What black ingratitude, therefore, to rob Him of His supreme right of friendship and of love for our soul, for whose happiness He laid down His life on Calvary, and dwells now upon our altars, awaiting us with the fullness of divine love.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

I. God Alone.

"For of Him, and by Him, and in Him, are all things: to Him be glory forever. Amen."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

God alone! God alone! Let us catch from the Apostle the spirit of being for God alone in all that we are; and by Him and in Him all things of ours forever. Amen. Is not this the essential life of the creature, to be wholly united to the Creator? Surely all the lessons Holy Church would teach us on Trinity Sunday are summed up in her claim for God's rights, as she reads to us the penetrating words of St. Paul: "For of Him, and by Him, and in Him, are all things: to Him be glory forever. Amen." In this spirit did St. Charles Borromeo give the following rules for advancing in piety: "He who desires to make any progress in the service of God, must begin every day of his life with new ardor; must keep himself in the presence of God as much as possible; and must have no other views or end in all his actions but the divine honor" (see *Butler's Lives,* Nov. 4). Nor does this apply only to those whose souls are stirred with the noble ambition to be perfect; it refers also to the weary wretch who is fighting for the very citadel of eternal hope; and he is saved, if he can but say with the prophet: "I am Thine, O Lord, save me!" (Ps. cxviii. 94.)

To take God into account in all things—does it not simplify the problem of salvation? Our Lord's whole life was thus simplified and unified, as He proclaimed to His Father in his hour of bitterest trial: "Not My will but Thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42). And so would He have us act, saying to each one: "If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome" (Luke xi. 34). The eye here meant is the heart's intention (*Imitation,* Book II., 4). As often as one keeps God in view his activity is divine. If he attains to this as a habit of mind, his whole life is filled with God—he sees God in his heart as he sees his body, his hands, and his feet with his outward eyes. God sees Himself in that heart; for the soul of man is made in the likeness of God, and has only to be clean to show what God is and to see what God is—clean of all else but a divine intention. Therefore our Savior's sixth beatitude: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). A readiness to go to God by prayer to Him and by counsel with His friends; to start from God as our original motive, primal cause, first purpose; to end with God as the "crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation" (Ecclus. i. 22), here is the programme of a Christian's day. The state of Christian peace is an habitual interior attitude by which a soul promptly sets aside all motives of conduct but God alone. Every Christian has a powerful incentive planted within him thus to live and work by and towards God alone. But we are hindered by our defective nature from promptly yielding to this divine drawing; by worldly motives, sensual appetites, the insinuations of Satan: interest, vainglory, pleasures, aversions.

What is the aim of life? God: nothing else; nothing less—God as the motive of all things, the object, the joy, the sorrow of all life. He gradually (sometimes, but rarely, suddenly) invades the dominion of the human will, even the reasonable will of man which He has endowed with freedom, and He masters its decisions, inspires its impulses. Finally He so possesses us that we grow almost habitually conscious of His mastery, and continually rejoice in it. The maxims of Christ's Gospel finally fertilize every thought, word, and act with a divine fecundity, even those things that concern our trade with man and our labor for bread. As to the devotional life, all of it, from such purely divine things as the sacraments down to our littlest prayers, is punctuated with divine aspirations, as the page of a book with commas and periods, casting upon us flashes of God's presence, thrills of God's love.

Perhaps the most vital aspect is this: seldom does a fervent soul fail to think of God as his aim and end; but is God the only end? Is there an exclusive quality in the intention? Is it God alone? Père Lallemant boldly impeaches the highest actions of having mixed motives, such even as going across seas on the heathen missions. Doubtless absolutely unmixed motives are very rare. St. Philip Neri had a revelation that only one soul in Rome gained the full indulgence of a jubilee preached there in his time. At any rate, we should not be moved consciously by any other motive but God. And even motives in themselves religious should be scrutinized. It is easy for our motive of the honor of Holy Church to become racial. Is it not too often so? a kind of pious partisanship; a particular national kind of religion rated as preferable to other kinds; or the universal triumph of a favorite devotion; or joy in the holy statistics of outward religious bigness. But *Deo Gratias* for even such mixed motives, for the partisanship may be easily transferred to God alone, yet only with pain and not seldom with risk of losing all religious motive. When it comes to writing and preaching, O how easily may the gold be "made dim" (Lam. iv. 1) by love of fine rhetoric, by the pride of learning, by the vainglory of voice and bearing, by the adulation of one's familiars. The gold is still there, but if God's fire searched that heart, it would find much fuel to consume in and about the unburnable purity of the gold itself.

It is as if a strainer were to be placed at the heart, and each drop of blood triturated infinitesimally and painfully cleansed. Now the blood of our life is our devotions, prayers, meditations, sacraments. In these one's heart may have a high pressure of sentiment for God. But is it for God and devotional feeling, or God alone; God whether or no; God unconditionally; Christ and His Gospel and His graces exclusively? Notice a painter at work on a house. He has a brush and a paint pot, and he lays on the color. But he always has a dry brush stuck in his waistband: with it he is always ready to brush away any dust and all dirt and dead flies, so that his paint may have fair play and get right onto and into the wood: a clean place for the paint. So must God's grace have a clean, sweet place in our souls to fall upon, like the miraculous dew upon the fleece of Gedeon (Judges vi. 37). Hence the superior worth of resolutions made in sadness of heart, every dead fly of worldliness is strained out by the stress of sorrow, every particle of self-interest brushed away by the sharp besom of adversity: God alone the only motive, because He alone is left to the soul. Then the heart (to use another comparison) is like a vessel of untinted glass filled with clear water, when the water and the glass are but one pure crystal; so is the soul when cleansed of all but the one divine motive of God's will, filled with holy purposes only.

This concentration of motive upon God alone essentially affects our dealings with non-Catholics. We must emphasize the interior notes of Catholicity if we would win our way in discussing religious matters: all other Catholic things are indeed good, but God alone is best. If you speak about the Real Presence, show that it is the humanity and divinity of the Only-begotten of the Father bestowed upon us with miraculous generosity. Tell your Protestant friend just what *God* does for you when you go to confession—God in your bitter sorrow as in the cloud by day and the fire by night (Exod. xiv. 20). When you speak of Catholic faith show how your obedience to the Pope generates God's peace in your mind, solid comfort and "joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). Other arguments have their place; not even the littlest mark of the true Church, be it inner or outer, but tends to make converts when pointed to by charity's kind hand; but most of them are indirect evidence, whereas God as He is in Christ and in His Church, brings directly under observation the one essential argument. There are arguments which convince by slow percolation of truth, drop by drop, through the many intricate passages of reason. Some of these are that the Church founded civilization; that she is our race's foremost educator; makes the ideal citizen; also the ideal family. All such are good arguments, but subsidiary ones, placing antecedent probabilities to introduce the main argument, which is the manifest presence of God in the Church in all her works and in all ages, and in the soul of everyone of her worthy children. The Church is a powerful, majestic institution. But what your non-Catholic friend wants is not institutions but God. He wants God from you in every religious talk, in every doctrine of the Church, every ceremony. Most if not all Protestants fancy that the Church stands athwart their way to God. You must show them that if this be so, it is not to bar their progress to God, but as God's own intermediary and guide, so appointed, and entirely competent. Until you show that the Church is indispensable for leading souls to immediate union with God, you have shown but her outward side, whereas "all the glory of the king's daughter is within" (Ps. xliv. 14)—it is God. A Protestant of information and enthusiasm may pay high honor to the Church for rhetorical ends wholly, as did Macauley in his famous piece known as the *New Zealander*. But you look in vain through such showy tributes of praise for any admission that she is "the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15).

"The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 4), exclaims Solomon, and this is most entirely true of His Church, in which He is plainly visible, if one is but guided to the proper point of view. "God is in His holy place" (Ps. lxvii. 6), and the vision of God is granted there. Men are born with an irrepressible longing to see God, and yet with defective spiritual eyesight. A painful mental operation, like the removal of a cataract from one's bodily eyes, is needed before we can see our Creator and Redeemer, so that it may be said of us as of the newly-converted Saul of Tarsus: "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight" (Acts ix. 18). When one admits that he begins to see Catholic things in a different light than he formerly did, he has made a good degree of progress. Compare the natural religious insight to the lens of an astronomer's telescope. First it is but a great mass of raw glass, and must be ground to the proper convex shape. It now looks smooth enough; but an immense labor of polishing is yet to be expended upon it, taxing the skill of experts. And when all is done in the manufacture, other experts must adjust it for use; and elaborate cleansing is necessary every time it is used. It is not otherwise with the religious faculty of the mind, and for the understanding of religious truth.

Bear in mind that our non-Catholic people had rather possess God without any Church. The original delirium of Protestantism was that religion was hurt by organization. Somewhat cured of that by bitter failure, they yet remain suspicious of spiritual institutions. Majesty of organism, vast and compact and perpetual, make a spectacle of external religious power calculated to excite not admiration, but distrust in the average non-Catholic mind. This can be overcome when the Church means to them, as it does to us, "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). The Catholic religion is a maze of observances and formalities when seen from without, with little fruit of interior union with divine things, all managed by a system of amazing strength—simply for outward uniformity, compelling military obedience to relentless discipline. When it is known at last that all the Church's power does but make for personal and immediate communication with God, makes that easier, safer, more permanent, nay, that the Church is the means plainly appointed by God, for that end, then pile up as high as the sky the splendors of her external organism.

II. Apostolic Zeal.

"Going, therefore, teach all nations"—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

And after having thus empowered them to make disciples of the whole world, our Lord added: "Behold, I am with you all days."

Thus is the perpetuity of the truth of Christ, and of its teaching simply the perpetuity of His own zeal for souls. Now our divine Master has lost nothing of His love for souls since He uttered those words. His love of our souls brought Him down on earth to save men; it nailed Him to the cross to die for them; it raised Him from the dead to glorify them; it caused Him to make the Apostles the charter members of His Church to save them, filling them with His own spirit of love for mankind. All this, does it not show our Lord's earnest purpose to save our race? And precisely the same immense purpose to save souls is His whole mission this day. This it is that pardons sinners now as it did the sinners of His time. It enthrones Him in the Eucharist and imparts Him in communion now, as it did in the earliest Christian days, and with the same absolute generosity.

But what about ourselves? Are we identical in zeal with the Apostles and primitive Christians, to whom those words were spoken: "Going teach all nations?" Some of us are. We meet with laymen (for them I am speaking) who in their private lives teach divine things constantly, and never without good success. They do good things as a fountain pours out sweet water. Their example at home and among their acquaintances is clean and sweet, and their words, when occasion offers, are straight guideposts to Catholic truth and virtue. They never think of their own salvation without praying for that of someone else. St. John Baptist de Rossi tells of their eternal hopes. "Do you know," he asks, "the shortest way to get to heaven? It is to work for your neighbor's soul and body till you drop dead?" In the lives of good men and women, therefore, our Savior's promise is made good: "Behold, I am with you all days."

Such a zealous convert maker is our Lord's human document, proving that He was a true prophet, and did not found His Church in vain. A zealous Catholic is Christ's glory on earth, and that of His Father in heaven. Our Lord emphatically affirms this: "In this is My

Father glorified, that you bring forth very much fruit, and become My disciples" (John xv. 8). The whole of our religious character is, or ought to be, missionary. Some of it, like our speaking kind words, our spreading good books, our praying for conversions, is directly missionary. Indirectly missionary is everything else that we do for God and for ourselves, for by even our devout feelings and good intentions, we turn every prayer and every virtue into the Church's common stock of merits. Our Redeemer and our good angels and saints utilize it all for the salvation of mankind.

Once our Lord said to His followers: "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13). This applies to all Christians, particularly to those who are gifted with education, position, wealth, force of character, which are bestowed on them only for God's good purpose of saving others as salt saves meat from rotting. But more particularly are those Christians the salt of the earth who stand plainly for God, as do parents, teachers, leading members of families, employers of others, and men and women engaged in professional life of any kind. These are not only curative and preservative of the soul of others as salt is of food, but they are (if they are true to their divine calling) the very fragrance of heaven to their fellowmen, as St. Paul says: "We are the good odor of Christ unto God" (2 Cor. ii. 15). A good Christian breathes about him an atmosphere of love. He attracts non-Catholics. He stimulates their inquiries about religion. He may own little or much of the goods of this life. But he is owner in fee simple of all the good things of eternal life, and he has them to give away abundantly. Let us ask ourselves each and all, whether we are such followers of Christ as would be worthy to partake of the apostolate He established by the words of this day's Gospel.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

I. Holy Communion.

"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me."—*From this Day's Gospel.*

How great a festival is this, my brethren, since we commemorate the gift of the Son of God in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, holy Mass and communion, His Real Presence upon our altars, and the Church's sacred priesthood. We have but just ended our thanks to Him for the gift of His Holy Spirit at Pentecost; and now the Church bids us thank Him for His own Body and Blood, soul and divinity. Surely Jesus Christ's is a marvelous love: how plentifully does He love. What is so plentiful as the grace of God—another name for the indwelling Holy Ghost—by Whom we can say, "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16). Every man, every hour that he uses His reason, is proffered this inner embrace of infinite love—no less; for the third divine Person hovers over our every thought to possess it. And now we rejoice in God's loving offer of His Only-begotten Son made man, uniting us to the eternal Father in a union so strict that we are identified with God as if we were Christ Himself: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me."

Our aspiration, at least in our better moods, is to love God on earth as the blessed love Him in heaven. No one but our Savior achieved this purpose altogether perfectly, though we may claim that His blessed Mother shared that privilege by reason of the grace of her maternity. But He that loved God so supremely now floods us with His love's abundance, for whatever is His, is shared with us in the Eucharist, O, so gladly, so abundantly! This is the peculiar effect of receiving communion, to love as Jesus loves, to will what He wills—such is the peculiar and necessary grace of the sacrament. Then notice the plentifulness of Christ's real self as paralleling that of His Holy Spirit. For if by sin we suppress and grieve the Spirit of God (Eph. iv. 30) as He offers us love, He descends again upon us and inspires us to pray for His return and for the renewal of His love within us (Ps. l. 12). Note another resemblance: for as His Spirit is sent upon all men, possessing and to possess them, so is Christ's Body and Blood distributed to all men, in town and country, in little chapels and in grand cathedrals, at deathbeds of paupers and of princes alike. Truly, my brethren, we can herein echo the Apostle's universal claim to all of God's favors, for having given us His Spirit and His Only-begotten Son, "How hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) A due appreciation of this sacrament makes all things holy to us, for what is there of mute, senseless matter, or of life human or angelic, that is not made divine in this universal gift. Especially are we blessed in our churches. Within reach of every Catholic—from many a one's home it is but a block or two away—is a place holier than ancient Sion or Sinai. And God says by His prophet "in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation" (Mal. i. 11). There we attend to God, and He attends to us in closest intimacy; and if we receive communion, then what He is to the Father that we become to Himself. Is it not good to have such holy places as churches and altars? And, O, is it not good to have a religion of such divine fullness? It is related of St. Philip Neri that if when passing through a sacristy he happened to see a chalice, that reminder of the divine banquet caused him to melt into tender expressions of love.

To pass from saints to sinners, notice how even a bad Catholic will yet respond to his soul's act of faith in the Real Presence, by taking off his hat as he passes a church. He has a low standard of living, but yet keeps a high standard of believing. Being a sinner, he is content with signs of God rather than with the divine reality; he will not be saved by doffing his hat on the street. But he will be much more easily damned if he gives up belief in the holiness of that church; and how easily may his good angel slip him into that ever-open door some day, since he believes, as firmly as he does his own existence, that therein is enthroned infinite pity for sinners. The step from death to life is often that from the street to the altar. Yea, and the step from ordinary goodness to heroic holiness is not seldom taken when a regular custom of daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament is established. St. Alphonsus in his preface to his supremely beautiful volume, *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament,* says: "In this little book I feel myself bound, at least out of gratitude to my Jesus in the holy Sacrament, that through the means of this devotion of making visits to Him on the altar, which I practised, though with so much tepidity and in so imperfect a manner, I abandoned the world."

How good is God to give us in this our place of exile a house that is His holy of holies. As we enter a church our soul feels at home. No family is more at home in the sweetest domestic shrine than it is in that shrine before whose altar its beloved father and mother were made one in sacred marriage; where the little ones were made children of God by holy Baptism, and ranked among angels at first communion; where all its members bathe in the precious Blood in confession and banquet with angels at the altar rail, and where holy Mass shall be offered over each one's corpse when they are come to the end of life. In praise of that house we may well appropriate the words that tell us that the walls of Sion chant Jehovah's praise. Our hearts resound with heavenly voices there. Our most sacred moments are spent there. Even in our sinfulness, the old habit of attending Mass on Sundays bends our footsteps to the peaceful influences of the Eucharistic house. We are moved by wordless invitations, which are often more powerful incentives to repentance than the noblest preacher's words; for there everything proclaims: "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days" (Ps. xcii. 5).

In the hymn for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, our Mother Church praises the Real Presence as being both the stimulant of our faith and its nearest and plainest object:

> "Types and shadows have their ending
> For the newer rite is here.
> Faith our outward sense befriending,
> Makes our inward vision clear."

The defect of taste and touch, sight and hearing, is that they furnish the mind with only the dress of divine things. Then comes faith to the rescue; and it casts a light upon the tabernacle so penetrating that the reality of God is seen, dimly, indeed, but with immense sweetness. The glory of the grace of faith is that it gives my loving soul direct impressions of God upon the altar by a power of "inward vision" all its own. Nor does the new force of thought leave even my senses quite unaided; for defective as they are by nature, it nevertheless mends them, and improves them to that degree that they borrow the inner brightness and sweetness of the soul's belief. So that many a one can affirm of his Eucharistic experience: "And we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). In communion, O how deep the impression of God sinks into our mental faculties; and how fully does it sanctify our bodily life; as we see and possess Him under His humble veils as we taste Him at the altar rail; as we hear Him in the tones of the Eucharistic words in holy Mass. But this favor is only fully enjoyed when the sacrament is rightly prepared for.

Consider the supreme worth of this sacrament for our struggle against our enemies. Now no temptations are so dangerous as those against faith, because they threaten to quench the lamp of God's truth in the temple of our mind. And none others are more apt to be the particular work of the devil; for every heresy is a gigantic lie, and the devil "is a liar and the father thereof" (John viii. 44). But when you receive communion worthily, you may say: Now let the lying demon do his worst, for the God of truth has done His best with me. When He Who is Truth Incarnate comes into my soul, what a change from darkness into light. How can anyone pillow his mind upon the bosom of Him Who is consubstantial with infinite and eternal truth, and after that ever love a lie? The Apostle tells his converts that they are "the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, and written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart" (2 Cor. iii. 3). When Jesus enters your soul at communion, all articles of faith are instantly brightened. What you say or write of your faith to a friend becomes but a transcript of what you write on your soul in communion by the inner dictation of your faith's "author and finisher" (Heb. xii. 2). When St. Francis de Sales was engaged in composing one of his immortal books, he thus wrote to a dear friend: "I am going to put my hand to the book on *The Love of God,* and I will try to write as much on my heart as on the paper" (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 445). Faith blossoms and flourishes like a rose in a heart whose warmth is that of the divine heart of Jesus.

Take out of your religion the Eucharist, out of your mind the faith in it, and out of your life the blessed joy of it—the Real Presence, the sacrifice of the Mass, the receiving of communion, the priesthood—how little religion would be left to you. What an infinite religion would be lost to you. How much less would God have given you of the tenderness of His love; how much less of your love would you have given Him; how much less faith in Christ and trust in Him? If you lost the Eucharist it would take the heart out of your religion—so you say. And you are right. Why, then, do I say these impossible things, save to remind you that if these gaps and chasms in Christ's religion be impossible and only imaginary to you, they are direst reality to your Protestant brethren. Multitudes of them are sincere followers of Christ in a religion without His Real Presence, the sacrifice of the Mass, Holy Communion, and the

Christian priesthood. When you make Catholics of them, you give them a religion with the heart of God in it. Fortunately, by coming in contact with these heart's pulses of Eucharistic grace through your explanation of them, converts are more easily made than by any other way.

Just once a year to communion: my brethren to improve upon that ignoble custom should be the fitting event of this feast of God's generosity to us. And think of the miserable motive which limits our communions to the mean and scanty dole of one communion in a year: fear of excommunication, dire forebodings of the Church's ban, expulsion from some good Catholic society, the tears of a good wife or of an anxious mother. Yet not a few among us are content with this stingy and ignoble Catholicity. Mark such a one juggling meantime with God's commandments, slipping into the back alleys of vice, striving to live bad in such a way as to look good. Mark the heartbreak of his devout friends when his miserable corpse is brought home from some fatal accident. Consider all that God means by the communion of His Son's Body and Blood, soul and divinity, offered to that creature of His for years and years of his shameful career, and offered in vain. How different are those who go to the other extreme of the Church's legislation, and never think of her command of yearly communion with its legal threats, but joyfully heed our present Holy Father's exhortation to daily communion, with its touching assurances of a happy life here on earth, and Paradise forever hereafter.

The Real Presence—a well-chosen term—for Jesus is really here. As if He said to His people: Here is all that I am to My Father as the living God, all that I am to Him and to you as the living and the dying and the risen Man. I am really present with you, always, and in every church, for public celebration of My love for you, for private and intimate communing with you, overflowing with a divine wealth of joy and of love for you, for all of you and for each of you. We hear much of the fear of God, nor is it praised too much. But that fear should always be the dread of losing by sin so divine a love as that of Jesus for us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

"Dost thou want a gift? Accept Me." Such is our Redeemer's word from the altar. But He adds this: "Dost thou not want to give *Me* a gift? Then offer Me thyself: thou shalt be met halfway by My gift of Myself, and we shall be made one in body and blood, soul and divinity, for he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him. There shall be no further giving and receiving necessary between Me and thee. Give all to Me, and thou shalt receive all from Me."

II. Confession as a Preparation for Holy Communion.

"And He sent His servants at the hour of supper, to say unto them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready"—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Holy Church chooses this parable of our Lord, my brethren, to remind us of the heavenly banquet of the Eucharist, to which at this time of the year we are in a special manner invited. She would have us make ourselves worthy of so divine a favor. Now, worthy to receive Holy Communion no created being can ever hope to be, unless the worthiness of God be granted to him. Thus, even our Immaculate Mother Mary said of her conception of the Son of God: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior, because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid" (Luke i. 47, 48). Her worthiness was a pure boon from God to a most humble soul.

A deep flowing sentiment of humility, self-contempt, sincere sorrow for our sins—these are the beginnings of worthiness for receiving the blessed Eucharist, and you know that they are the freely-given inspirations of grace. Cherish contrition for sin, my brethren; deepen its intensity by meditating on our Lord's Passion, and you will soon feel that you have been made worthy, as far, at least, as the first step is concerned.

A far higher worthiness is vouchsafed us by the sacrament of Penance. Our sorrow is therein well proved. To say to the empty air I am a sinner and I am sorry, is one thing. To tell our sins by name; to measure them out and weigh them; to taste and smell and handle their filthy guilt; to own up to them frankly and shamefacedly—all in the presence of God's minister of reconciliation, ah, that is quite another thing. It tests our sincerity; that is the first effect. The second is that it shows our humility. And it wins the supreme gift of divine love. The sacrament of Penance finds us half-hearted and makes us whole-hearted in our preparation for Holy Communion. Therefore did our Lord say to the paralytic while He forgave him his sins: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 2).

Between kneeling down and rising up at confession many a one is made a new man. The wedding garment, which is the love of God out of a motive of sorrow for sin, is bestowed by the sacramental absolution. Behold, then, the supreme necessity of preparing rightly for confession. It is the work of one sacrament fitting us for another and a more divine one, Holy Communion. It uses will, memory and understanding to the best possible purpose, namely, the knowing and remembering and hating our own wickedness; knowing, remembering and loving God for His infinite goodness towards us. It does all this in a most personal manner. Singly and alone do we deal with Christ the Judge, represented by our confessor. Straight into the heaven of heavens do we send our act of humble confidence, crying out with the Apostle: "He loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

Then comes the wedding feast. Holy angels, oh, so happy to be our escort, go forward with us to the altar, chanting their glorious anthems, marching with their heavenly cadence, and adoring with us the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world. But all depends on the spirit in which we have bowed down in lowly sorrow at the feet of our Father confessor. The Psalmist tells us that God hath regard to the preparation of our hearts (Ps. x. 17). He never stops at the surface. Deep down into our thoughts does His Holy Spirit penetrate, and there He listens to the lightest whisper of regret for sin, breathes upon it a divine motive of fear, and then a higher one of hope and of love. Thus we are clothed with supernatural contrition, a garment ornamented with the jewels of a most splendid charity in the sacrament of Penance.

Brethren, we must one and all do our best to make ourselves worthy of Holy Communion, not forgetting to pray for poor sinners who, by neglecting it, are in danger of being cast into outer darkness for all eternity.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Saving Sinners.

"The publicans and sinners drew near unto Jesus to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

In another place they nick-named our Lord "the Friend of sinners" (Luke vii. 34). He was glad thus to be taunted, for sinners are His favorite class, just as sick people are a physician's favorites; He calls Himself the Physician of souls sick unto death with mortal sin (Luke v. 31). In nothing, therefore, would He be better pleased with us than that we, in loving imitation of Him, would feel among sinners like a doctor in a hospital—quite at home with them, their friend and their confidant and their healer. The Saints tell us that charity towards the poor begins by our feeling poor like them. Doubtless, then, our first step in helping sinners is to cultivate an interior sentiment of fellowship with them, and fully appreciating the misfortune of being outcasts from God. Although we may be sure enough of being ourselves in God's favor, yet our hearts are mere pieces of physical anatomy if they do not feel distressed at the sight of immortal souls in momentary peril of being burnt in hell forever. A true man mourns over the misdeeds of his friend as if they were his own. Such were our Savior's feelings about sinners; so that He ever walked in the sight of men and angels clad in human wickedness, reeking with its filthiness, and finally condemned and executed publicly as the foremost sinner of the whole abominable race of mankind. "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. ii. 17).

Now for the preparation of this good work of saving sinners—a work so intimately imposed upon parents and all near relatives, so precious a jewel in the crown of Christian friendship—for the necessary preparation of it we must depend on our prayers. Such a prayer must be the outpouring of a heart full of love for Jesus Crucified, full of sympathy for the worst kind of human misery—enmity with God. Our Savior prayed as much as He preached; His nights were for prayer for sinners as His days were for speaking to them. The Saints, whose words were salvation to multitudes, acted the same way. Before St. Paul of the Cross preached a mission sermon, he went before the Blessed Sacrament, and there prostrate on the ground he recited the Athanasian Creed with sentiments of most fervent faith in God, the holy Trinity and our Lord's divinity, in order that he might address sinners in the true spirit, as the Apostle gives it: "As from God, before God, in Christ we preach" (2 Cor. ii. 17). When you go forth to this work of saving a sin-stricken friend, my brethren, you enter a domain peculiarly God's own—that of men's souls. So felt St. Paul of the Cross, and hence his marvelous success. An army officer of rank, after making his confession to him, said: "Father Paul, I have been on the field of battle and under the fire of cannon, and I have never trembled;

but when I listened to your warnings about eternity, I trembled from head to foot" (*Oratorian Life,* vol. i., p. 224). Your field of battle is but the quiet talk of two laymen together. But the two quiet talkers are none the less the two champions of heaven and of hell joined in mortal combat. See well to your prayers. The prayers and tears and blood of Jesus Christ have purchased the victory, Whose spoils are the eternal years of Paradise. Is it not well to offer your confessions and communions, to enlist the help of your favorite Saints, especially of the Mother of the Crucified, before venturing into such an arena?

It is prayer and a prayerful life, therefore, that sets one forth in helping sinners to repentance. It inflames the thoughts with the fire of zeal, so that when you go to your good work, you resemble the ancient prophet: "And Elias the prophet stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch" (Ecclus. xlviii. 1). A burning zeal is needed—hot as fire, quick as lightning, even though your kindness makes your words as a gentle dew to your friend. You can acquire a power to electrify a soul by prayerfully loving its salvation; for the Lord "maketh His ministers flames of fire" (Heb. i. 7). "My faith keeps me warm," said an aged mother to her son, who was lying abed while she was starting off to Mass on a wintry Sunday morning—he had told her that she would perish of cold. Such a fire it was that our risen Lord communicated to the souls of the two disciples in their twilight journey to Emmaus; for after He had vanished out of their sight, "they said one to another: Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke xxiv. 32.) It is well indeed to beware of a zeal whose fire is superheated, and we should temper our words with prudence, and soften them with kindness. But all the same our zeal must burn strong and bright.

Zeal, as we have seen, must be temperate, for, according to à Kempis, "We are sometimes moved with passion and we mistake it for zeal" (*Imitation,* Book II., ch. v.). Kindliness of manner is of better service in a divine work than boldness of assertion. Our Redeemer was sovereign Master of all truth and all ways of communicating it. Yet He instinctively managed His hearers by a feeling of tenderness; and He gives that as His rule of conversation: "I am in the midst of you as one who serves" (Luke xxii. 27). Real affection for a sinful friend—have that, and you will not put on lofty airs with him. Pious bullying may comfort you, but it will not change him. Kindness is the major domo in the house of holy counsel. St. Augustine was truly a tremendous sinner, and he was converted by St. Ambrose; but he bears witness: "I began to love him, not at first as a teacher of truth, which I despaired of finding in Thy Church, O Lord, but as a fellow-creature who was kind to me" (*Confessions,* Book V., ch. xiii.). So manage that your sinful friend will begin to love you as you begin to correct him. Tone and manner must attract, whilst the divine force of reason and the law of God persuade. In your own mind make as little of the guilt of your sinful friend as you dare, and in your talk with him arm his better nature against his own wickedness. A sinner must be reprimanded with the stratagems of a mother administering medicine to a sick baby. And is not this the holier way? Does it not win God's help more surely? according to Solomon: "When the ways of a man shall please the Lord, He will convert even his enemies to peace" (Prov. xvi. 7). Sour looks and hard words are bad sauce for a fraternal admonition. We admit that sometimes a stern reproof is of avail, nay, now and then it is quite the only hope of success. But it can best be made efficacious by a half-revealed longing to console rather than to frighten. So says the Psalmist of God's admonitions: "Mercy and truth have met together; justice and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). The whole tenor of one's life should be fit to exhibit as his credentials to stand for God. Cardinal Newman prays in his *Meditations:* "Make me preach Thee without preaching—not by words, but by my example and by the catching force, the sympathetic influence, of what I do—by my resemblance to Thy

Saints, and the evident fullness of the love which my heart bears to Thee."

It is a mistake to suppose that the threats of divine wrath are the best means of moving a sinner to repentance—except the one who uses them has already conquered his impenitent friend by winning his admiration for his virtue. Many a sinner is driven to defiance rather than repentance by this sort of mismanagement. One may be the terror of a wicked friend unto salvation only in case he has first charmed him by his goodness. The more humiliating the divine ultimatum the sweeter should be its ambassador. "For," says the Wise Man, "the spirit of wisdom is benevolent" (Wisd. i. 6). What is unwelcome to a sinner must be handed to him by one who is personally very welcome indeed.

When St. Bernard was on what he thought to be his deathbed, he wrote to a dear friend: "I have desired to write to you with my own hand, to show you how much I love you, and that when you recognize my handwriting you may also recognize my heart." Indeed, my brethren, the man who speaks for Jesus Crucified should show a good heart, and should speak as from his deathbed. Heart and words, spoken or written, should be as nearly one as sign and the thing signified ever can be. If my kind heart is in my voice my words will surely win the victory.

Consider the joy of saving a sinful soul. How holy a self-love is that which ministers to our enjoyment through our relieving the misery of another. Would you not rather have a share of Christ's joy in bringing in His lost sheep, than the self-gratulation of the sinless but timid Christian, who is afraid to venture on even the littlest excursion from the ignoble security of a do-nothing piety? Few of us are aware of the danger of spiritual indolence in a devout life; and few consider the spiritual gluttony practised in devouring the Lord's banquet unmindful of His starving sheep outside the fold of His love. This torpidity of spirit is often veiled to our eyes by a false humility, which persuades us that we are not well equipped to save sinners or to convert non-Catholics. But real Catholic humility, while distrustful of self, is yet boldly confident of God's help. St. Paul was the humblest of men, and he bitterly lamented the days he spent persecuting Christ in the person of His followers. Yet he affirmed: "To me, the least of all the saints, is given this grace, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men" (Eph. iii. 8, 9). How ineffable a dignity is granted to the slayer of St. Stephen—to enlighten all men! Shall not any sincere Christian aspire to save at least some near friend, some single individual whom he loves, since one who had raged against Christ and shed the blood of His followers, after his conversion took upon him the task of saving the whole world?

II. "Strong in Faith."

"Strong in faith."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

My brethren, this injunction of St. Peter means that we should strengthen our faith with love for God, and for His Church and sacraments. Charity is surely the supreme virtue. But the best is not without the better, nor the better without the good: so in religion the good, better, and best are faith, hope, and charity. "Now there remaineth: Faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. xiii. 13). Upward along these divine steps do our souls constantly move towards heaven, not without bearing other souls with us.

Compare charity to the fire of faith. When I believe in God's word I have faith. When I believe with earnestness and with deep love for my divine Teacher, then I can say with the Psalmist: "Thy word is exceedingly refined, and Thy servant hath loved it" (Ps. cxviii. 140). The fire of love is thus the brightness of faith, too often a heat latent and undeveloped. Light is one thing, heat is another; belief is one thing, faith is another. A Christian should be a sunglass to his friends;

he should gather the fire of the persuasion of others out of the rays of his own convictions.

We say of a man who halts at the door of Catholicity that he is a believer and yet not a convert—he is merely convinced. But we never say that of a true Catholic. Belief in a doctrine is like Adam before God breathed into his face the breath of life. But faith is belief alive with joy in the truth, affection for it, zest in the study of it, fear lest it be forfeited by sin. St. Thomas says that in matters of faith, conviction of the understanding is held firm by command of the will. His expression is *"imperio voluntatis,"* and it means the command of love; for the will rules by love. Convinced of Catholic truth, and in love with Catholic truth, are as different states of mind as knowing and loving. And in the virtue of faith they are made one.

Among the foremost attributes of faith is superhuman power. "If you have faith as a mustard seed you shall say to this mountain: Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you" (Matt. xvii. 19). To His truest lovers alone does our Master grant such a faith. And we know that as in removing mountains so in converting souls, love is the prime mover.

It takes deep love to say words and answer objections with the result, for instance, that a Unitarian shall at last exclaim to heaven:

"O God! I worship Thee,
More simply One, because supremely Three."—*Faber.*

To make a proud man believe a mystery more than ordinary reasoning is required; even the most conclusive hardly suffices, nay it frequently fails. To make him believe a mystery and love its mysteriousness so as to honor God by accepting His teaching blindly; that requires reasoning all aglow with divine love. Whoever would learn to teach must learn to love, and he must learn how to teach love. The normal school of the Christian teacher, be he prelate or priest, parent or friend, is Calvary. Hence, St. Francis de Sales says:

"Calvary is the academy of holy love." May the God of holy wisdom grant us that academy's high diploma. To teach truth one must teach love, or be content to impart a dead faith.

That most honored hero of love, the Christian martyr, is nevertheless said to have died for the faith. Faith fed by love grew strong in him, strong as death and harder than all the terrors of hell (Cant. viii. 6). It is not usually said of a martyr that he died for charity, but rather for the faith of Christ. Yet for faith's sake he offered to God charity's sublimest gift. For: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). Love of truth unto death is faith's sternest test.

This is the progress of a non-believing but sincere inquirer: First comes respect for some Catholic man. After that enters the curiosity about his beliefs, which is followed by the first actual inquiry, and usually by some amount of belief. But this is not yet faith, even though it goes on and believes all Catholicity. Faith unto salvation is granted to a mind believing under the spell of the love of God. Faith saves souls by the inspiration of love. This alone causes the heart to believe unto justice, and the mouth to make open profession of the faith unto salvation (Rom. x. 10). Only when that force stirs the soul does it rise up and enter the Church to be saved.

This journey is often made amid perils of soul and body, running the gauntlet of foes of earth and hell. All through it the soul is drawn onward by the secret allurements of God's love, but not without the pilotage of some loving Catholic friend. Are you fit to be such a pilot? A little knowledge of argumentation suffices if it be used with great affection.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Abandonment to Providence.

"I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

My brethren, these words of St. Paul inculcate trustfulness in God, as do all the words of this day's epistle: submission to the divine will under adverse conditions, with confident trust of future glory; submission entire and childlike; self-abandonment to divine Providence always and in everything. Of course this doctrine is essentially Christian. Our Savior was pleased to live from hand to mouth because that cast him totally into the arms of Providence. Does not this plan of life make us love God better? Does it not, furthermore, cause us to work better at our daily tasks, since they are thereby transformed into God's provision for our daily needs? If those tasks are such holy ones as charity prescribes, or, what is equivalent, such sacred duties as the support of one's family, then is our whole activity sanctified by constant advertence to our heavenly Father's care of us.

Venerable Joseph Cottolengo, of Turin, a saintly priest of the last century, was so perfectly sure of the care of God for his vast charities, that he solemnly dedicated them to divine Providence. Once his brother said to him: "I understand that all your earnings and revenues find their way to the Piccola Casa" [the Saint's house of refuge for the poor]. "You are mistaken," was the answer; "the Piccola Casa has no revenues, save what a kind Providence vouchsafes to send. I have nothing whatever to do with its support. This is God's work, not mine. Were I to drop a penny of my own into its treasury, I fear it would crumble into ruin." "I borrow so little trouble about the Piccola Casa," he said at another time, "that when I go away from it, I do not give it a thought" (*Life,* p. 104). Once, when absolutely without funds, and with not the least prospect of human assistance, he began to see the need of a large infirmary for sick women. After having spent the night in prayer, he went out in the morning in a heavy rain to a part of the grounds not yet built upon. There, amid the downpour, he traced the dimensions of a new structure with his walking stick, and had one of his workmen mark the lines with his spade. And then he said: "I defy all the powers of men to hinder me from raising this building" (*Life,* p. 106). The building soon stood on the spot, a solid proof of the Saint's wisdom in trusting Providence.

The harder practice of this holy abandonment is in cheerfully bearing injuries in order that by their means the will of God may be done upon us. Yet it is plain sailing when we get the correct reading of the signals of the Gospel. For notice what our Savior said to His murderous enemies in the Garden of Olives: "This is your hour" (Luke xxii. 53)—yours to slay Me, my Father's, none the less, to redeem you and all mankind by My death. In the same spirit the Apostle admonished certain Corinthians, who relied on lawsuits rather than on holy patience for the redress of wrongs: "Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (1 Cor. vi. 7.) God is pleased rather with patient endurance of injury than with the recovery of rights by an appeal to legal justice. The punishment of fraud is a good work, but uncomplaining submission to it for love of Christ Crucified is a far better work. As long as one does not forfeit the care of others' rights entrusted to him, the Gospel counsels him to submit quietly to imposition. To be passionately given to vindicating one's rights is to forego many a good opportunity of bearing the sufferings of time for the sake of "the glory to come." Furthermore, I must remember that in defending my rights before man I run the risk of losing my rights before God—by untruthfulness and by hatred and ill-wishing. Danger to my charity lurks in my keen sense of justice. Whereas a tendency to give up one's rights in imitation of Jesus Crucified is a school of forgiveness of injuries, and the schoolmaster is the Holy Ghost. St. Bernard calls our attention to King David's treatment of the man who publicly cursed him, as he was fleeing from Absalom: the royal penitent would by no means listen to those who asked leave to kill him. He said: "It is the Lord Who hath bid him curse David......Perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and the Lord may render me good for the cursing of this day" (2 Kings xvi. 10-12). St. Bernard thus comments: "The tongue of an evil speaker was raging against him, but David's concern was only to fathom the secret purpose of God in permitting it" (Sermon xxxiv. on the Canticles). Two things are to be considered in every evil done against me; first the injury and the man who does it, and, second, the permission of it by God in order that I may have the merit of suffering. Is it not the part of wisdom to dwell upon God's good will rather than upon man's evil will?

To see God in all happenings, to be entirely content with Him as He is revealed in daily occurrences, this is the mind of the true Christian. And it is the mind of Christ. To see self in all things, or to see men and only men for or against us in all things, this is plain worldly-mindedness. There is a middle condition of mind, namely, to see God in all things only after we cannot find self in them. And this is the mind of the timid Christian, that weary wayfarer to heaven who is ever looking for a place to sit down and rest. When all creatures fail him, then and only then is God sought; God is only his last resource. Is not this the average spirituality? And is it not ignoble? Père Caussade exhorts such a one: "Do but fulfill thy part; God will do the rest. Grace, working by itself, effects marvels which surpass the intelligence of man. For ear has not heard, eye has not seen, heart has not felt, what God conceives in His mind, resolves in His will, executes by His power, in souls wholly abandoned to Him."

The secret of holiness is in seeing God in all things, but especially in painful ones. This was our Redeemer's way, and it must be ours. It is by patience under every sort of misfortune, and in enduring every sort of injustice, that one attains the real Christian frame of mind; always, meanwhile, making sure of union of intention with Jesus Crucified. This virtue is, besides, a prime qualification for doing good to our neighbor. St. Paul had a full equipment of apostolic heroism. But our Savior gave him patience as his principal grace: "This man is to Me a vessel of election, to carry My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." But having thus appointed him His great missionary, our Lord added: "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts ix. 15, 16). We are used to say that the martyrs spread the faith by the shedding of their blood. But this is only half their merit, for the essence of it is that they shed their blood because it was God's will: it was by our martyrs' abandonment to God's providence that the cruel rage of tyrants became the means of the spread of the Gospel.

Perhaps your lot is cast among men and women whose foul wickedness, nay, whose very company, calls for a spirit of martyrdom on your part. Seek for comfort in no other way than by adoring God's will in placing you where you are. Not only will you find *comfort* for yourself, but you will win the eternal welfare of your tormentors. Says the holy man Job: "Nothing on earth is done without a cause, and sorrow doth not spring out of the ground" (Job v. 6). No; your sorrow is from above, even though the cause of it is inspired by the deep pit; just as the suffering and death of the Man of Sorrows were heaven's best boon to us, and yet the extreme of all wickedness actuated His enemies. Then look not downward upon the ground in time of affliction, but look upward to heaven for the grace of patience. "Tribulation worketh patience," teaches the Apostle, "and patience trial; and trial hope. And hope confoundeth not" (Rom. v. 4, 5).

Another advantage of a well-matured habit of abandonment to God's will, is that we thereby avail ourselves of current opportunities of virtue, instead of wasting our soul in longings for better things in the future. Present conditions are always best for the present, for they are here and now only by God's appointment. Perhaps your state of life is holy matrimony, and you sometimes wish God had made you a priest. But would you improve upon God's plan? Another, plagued by the hurly burly of business, sighs for the quiet hours of a prayerful vocation. Any harm in this? Not *exactly* harm, to be sure. But St. Teresa teaches that it is better to long for solitude painfully than to possess it joyfully. Solitude is more fruitful of virtue when longed for sadly than when possessed gladly. The virtue of abandonment to Providence is the balance between wanting and having in this our life of interminable postponements.

The differences of states of life seem immense, and the unequal distribution of heavenly favors would tempt us to think Providence guilty of partiality. But in the one thing essential there is perfect evenness in God's treatment: it is the grace of direct dealing with God in patient acceptance of a lowly or a hard lot in life. This levels one up to the highest order of eternal merit. Thereby, according to St. Paul, "He that is called in the Lord, being a bondsman, is the freeman of the Lord. Likewise he that is called, being free, is the bondsman of Christ" (1 Cor. vii. 22). From a comparison of states of life, or of joys and sorrows, turn your thoughts to "the glory to come." Albertus Magnus says: "When a person is in a state of bodily suffering, he often imagines that his life is useless in the sight of God. But, on the contrary, when he is thus unable to pray or to perform good works, his sufferings and desires bring him face to face with the Divinity, and that more closely than a thousand others who are in good health." One sees quickly, however, that this understanding of God's ways is closely joined to the study of the Passion and Death of our Redeemer.

II. Self-Abnegation.

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

These words of the Apostle St. Peter expressed his sense of unworthiness to be a close companion of our Savior, for he was wholly amazed at the majestic power of his Master, as shown by the miraculous draft of fishes. Did Peter sincerely mean this? Undoubtedly. And undoubtedly we mean what we say when we receive communion: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof." Some degree of humility every practising Catholic really possesses. May God grant us an increase of this virtue, so truly the favorite virtue of Him of Whom it is written: "He emptied Himself......He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. ii. 7, 8).

Humility is the virtue of a man who faces the truth about himself and owns up to it; and this becomes Christian humility when our motive is imitation of Christ. Such is the common definition of a trait of character which frankly acknowledges the sham and nonsense of claiming as our own virtues which come wholly from God, and condemns the hypocrisy of ignoring our sins and weaknesses, which, unlike our virtues, are ours by every title.

Real humility is best shown towards God by our contrition for our sins. Holy fear of God's chastisements is our tribute to God's injured rights—fear and reverence and remorse. When we offer such homage to God in our confession, He weaves holy love in and among these painful sentiments of self-abasement. The grace of sacramental contrition may be defined as thoughts of terror towards God on our part, and thoughts of love towards us on God's part, mingled and blended together by the sacrament of Penance.

Upon humility, therefore, must we depend for the grace of true sorrow and of valid absolution. And also for perseverance in God's friendship. No outlook is so bright as that of a penitent who is wholly disgusted with himself. On the other hand self-complacency, a spiritual taint not easy to detect, is omnious of future relapse into sin. "A self-contented conscience does not content God" is a saying of Blessed John of Avila. Lack of watchfulness is certain. And over-trustfulness of one's new-born virtue soon leads one into bad company, causes neglect of prayer, and forgetfulness of the promises made to one's Father confessor.

Of the signs of real humility which appear in our dealings with men, these are the plainest.

A humble man readily forgives injuries; he yields the first place to others; self-praise is far from his custom; self-defence is by no means "nature's first law" with him; self-conceit is hardly possible to him, for he has no self-esteem; you cannot hurt his feelings; you cannot encroach on his "rights," for his only rights are God's and his neighbor's, and these he defends courageously but calmly. Such traits, when not assumed or affected, not cringing or sneaking, but genuine and deep-seated, form a truly Christian character. Such a one is Christ's true disciple.

The opposite type is common enough. In conversation the proud man interrupts you and brow-beats you, because he is inclined to despise you and loves to bully you—loves to domineer over everybody. In domestic life he must be worshipped, for he is inflated with the consciousness of his own superiority holding a place of authority; he rules with a rod of iron. If a subordinate, he overflows with censure of his superiors, and is a ringleader in all insubordination. Submission is slavery to him; rebellion is bravery; detraction is candor. And if anyone speaks to him of his own faults, he resents it as an insult. He is always prating of his "rights."

How absolutely opposite is this pest of society to the humble man. Look, my brethren, at St. John the Baptist. Our Savior proclaimed him to be a prophet, and more than a prophet, and even equal to an angel. His sanctity dated from his mother's womb, and he proved by his death that he had the virtue of a martyr. Yet he did not claim to be so much as a disciple of our Savior. He yielded every honor and all office to men who were unspeakably less holy than he was. Hence did our Savior say of him: " Amen, I say to you there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. xi. 11).

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Kindness.

"Having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble; not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

THESE stringent words of the Prince of the Apostles, my brethren, exhort us to control our tempers, and by meekness and affection contribute to the happiness of our associates—" being lovers of the brotherhood." It is strange that a poor sinner should so forget God's pardon of his sins as to rail at the sins of others. " Remember the fear of God" says the Son of Sirach, " and thou shalt not be angry with thy neighbor" (Ecclus. xxviii. 8). The Lord has too much against me, that I should blaze up against others. " It were more just that thou shouldst accuse thyself," says à Kempis, " and excuse thy brother" (*Imitation,* Book II., ch. iii.). Self-accusation is the daily duty of every Christian, and it is a sacramental duty in confession. Did our Savior appoint any sacramental accusal of others?

St. Peter, therefore, condemns a person who assumes the responsibility of inward judgment and outward reproval of the conduct of others—as if he were thereto appointed by God. What saints dread, such a one longs for. The office of judge must actually be forced upon saints; but this one runs about looking for the chair of judgment and quickly installs himself in it. Sometimes he silences and tosses out the judge already there by divine right. He sits down alongside of Jesus Christ and among His Apostles on the throne of justice. He carries stories. He is touchy and quarrelsome. It is easy to offend him, hard to pacify him. If he happens to be right, yet he can by no means be a teacher of right, for he crams truths down men's throats, little knowing that one is tempted to hate truth taught by a turbulent spirit.

On the contrary, "the good peaceable man," as à Kempis calls him, is of a compassionate disposition, and exceedingly fond of peace; merciful towards wrongdoers; humble about his own rights, and impossible to offend; never contradicting; afraid of railing as of a poisonous gas in the air, good-natured and cheerful and accommodating. Now, my brethren, this is a habit of life hard to find in its perfection, yet often met with in some notable degree of beautiful development—for example, in many a parent, anxious indeed about the support of the family, but more desirous of its peace. Good peaceable men and women are not rare, for this garment of kindliness, like a sleeveless coat, fits everybody, becomes every state of life, matches every other virtue, and, according to the same St. Peter, "covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Peter iv. 8). How like our Redeemer is a kindly-disposed man, for He was divinely named the "Prince of Peace" (Isaias ix. 6). When a storm threatened shipwreck to His disciples, "He rebuked the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm" (Matt. viii. 26); so is it with our peaceable man—his very entrance into a warring family circle is as oil poured upon the troubled waters. He cultivates the calling of a peacemaker, which Jesus Christ affirms to be the vocation of God to an eternal kingdom (Matt. v. 9). Blessed, indeed, is the peacemaker, for having a superfluity of kindliness, he ever has a stock of gentle peace to give away.

How often do big quarrels suddenly blaze up from some little spark of irritation. Once we heard of two men, both fathers of families, who fought each other over a quarrel between their two little sons; and one of the men was killed. When the undertaker came to the house to prepare the corpse, he found the two boys in the street, quite reconciled, and playing happily together. An excuse sometimes offered is, "I lost my temper"—as if that helped matters. You lost your temper. Thus a knife blade loses its temper, and it bends and stays bent like lead. But if it is now useless, it can at least do little harm. But when you lose your temper, besides slashing your neighbor, you so cut and disfigure your own soul that a serious injury may result. To lose one's temper for a moment, for just a flash of anger, is no great harm, for one soon recovers himself; a few kind words of apology set everything right again. But this should not occur often; for it has been well said that temper is a weapon which you hold by the blade, and you not only hurt others with your railing and scolding, perhaps finally embitter them, but you also demoralize yourself.

Mark the drippings of aversion that accumulate from continuous scolding. One gradually grows into the habit of faultfinding, and then into the yet more bitter misery of unforgiveness of injuries, even the most trivial ones. How well our Lord knows this, since in our commonest prayer He bids us beg God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us." St. Teresa comments on this: "Jesus does not say: Forgive us because of our many penances, or prayers, or fasts, or because we have left all for Thee and love Thee fervently, and have suffered for Thee, and long to suffer more. He never bids us say: Forgive us because we have laid down our lives for Thee; nor the many other things a soul may have done when it loves Him and gives Him its will. He only makes us plead: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others their trespasses against us. Perhaps this is because He knows of our attachment to our miserable 'honor,' so that we will not overlook the least slight upon it, and that forgiveness is a difficult thing for us—therefore did He choose this as our offering to His Father in order to obtain our own forgiveness" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, ch. xxvi., 8).

When offering prayers, bestowing favors, and wishing prosperity, what persons should we prefer above all others? If we follow the example of our crucified Savior, we will prefer those who hate us and who have done us injuries. In doing favors, Christian gratitude, which remembers benefactors and friends, is hard pressed, overtaken and surpassed by Christian charity which remembers enemies, in imitation of our divine Master, Who spent His life in saving His enemies, and finally sacrificed it for them on the cross. Here is an example of how this may be done. In the eighth century St. Gregory, Bishop of Utrecht, had two brothers, whom he devotedly loved, and who were waylaid and killed by two robbers. The murderers were captured, and the secular authorities handed them over to the Saint for sentence—a happy decision for the assassins. The holy bishop took them into his house, completely converted them, gave each of them a suit of clothes and some money; and then he set them free. Brethren, if this seems extravagant kindness of heart, what think you of the living and eternal God ratifying the petition of His Only-begotten Son praying for His assassins in the very hour of His death: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34).

We hear of "an unbridled tongue." The example is drawn from the furious and destructive behavior of a runaway horse. Perhaps the saying began from St. James, who uses this comparison in his epistle. And, in truth, if there is in man any power to do evil that the devil might envy, it is the power of speaking wicked words. Like his own wickedness, our tongue is a breeder of fires, consuming the dearest human happiness, especially that of our homes: a fiery element of evil is a bad tongue. Thus St. James: "The tongue is indeed a little member......behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood. And the tongue is a fire, and a world of iniquity." And he adds that it is set on fire by hell (James iii. 5, 6).

Our Savior's Golden Rule gives us a short cut to the practice of kindliness: "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them" (Matt. vii. 12). One is shy of trying what claims to be a specific for all maladies. But this is a divine specific for the cure of all evil thoughts, words, and deeds towards our neighbor. And is it not simply reasonable to treat others as we would wish them to treat us? Mere natural feeling dictates the sayings: "Put yourself in his place before you condemn him;" and, "How would you like to be treated that way?" Our Lord's Golden Rule is based on our equality one with another before God—our supernatural brotherhood. It is a rule which measures all lines back to the Creator, and finds all men equidistant. All of us come from God, belong to God, tend to God, all are ruled by God, are redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and are to be judged by Him alone. But this Golden Rule is difficult to observe, because it demands a perfection above the powers of nature itself. Hence our Savior having given this as a maxim of His gospel, comes to our help with His divine grace, breeding in us by His interior inspirations and the example of His own life and death a character at once supernaturally generous and just. Such a character is "a lover of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble, not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing" —a man after our Savior's own heart.

How much nobler is the life of a kindly-disposed Christian than is that of a gossiper. Charity rules his heart and his tongue—the supreme virtue of our religion. St. Paul says of it: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely......is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil......Rejoiceth not in iniquity. ......Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 4-7). One whose words show this virtue is welcome in every circle; he is admired even by the wicked. He watches good men to praise them, bad men to make what defence he can of them. Is not this a happier way of life than that of the faultfinder? As a dog dreads a stick, so do men and women dread the tongue of the scold and the backbiter. As a sick man is glad and proud of his doctor because he is kind-hearted and skillful, so are suffering souls glad and proud of the kind-hearted, kindly-spoken Christians who frequent their homes. Hence the exhortation of the Holy Spirit: "Who is the man that desireth life, who loveth to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Ps. xxxiii. 13, 14). No one is so like our Savior as a man or woman of a strong nature, and whose whole strength is for peace and for kindness among his brethren and his acquaintances.

II. Occasions of Sin.

"If the wolf shall at any time have fellowship with the lamb, so the sinner with the just" (Ecclus. xiii. 21).

By these words, my brethren, the Holy Spirit warns us to keep away from bad companions, and to avoid all other dangerous occasions of sin. Many are blind to this peril, and sometimes they are refused absolution on that account. For he that does not promise to avoid what leads him into sin, cannot be trusted when he promises to avoid the sin itself.

One of the occasions of sin is encountered by young people in keeping company with a view to holy matrimony. With regard to this we have one warning to give. It is that the young friends treat each other with Christian decorum, nay, with deepest respect. They should avoid lonely interviews, bearing in mind that secrecy is the commonest disguise of unchastity. Our Savior says that "men love darkness rather than light, because their works are evil" (John iii. 19). Hearken instantly to the protest of your conscience, and let your conscience be instructed by the advice of your elders. Especially obtain the counsel of your Father confessor, with whom you should be exceedingly open. Vividly remember that God is present everywhere. Remember, too, our Redeemer's words, that the ideal purity of our life is that of "the angels in heaven" (Mark xii. 25), and that whilst you are keeping company you are making your novitiate for matrimony, which is a state of life holy in every respect, nay, whose vows are not only holy but are sacramental. We venture to insist that engagements to marry should not be too long protracted, and interviews should not be very frequent. We suggest weekly communion as a remote preparation for the sacrament, or at least monthly. Mutual agreements about particular prayers and devotional exercises are very beneficial. As to recreation, we are persuaded that it should, as far as possible, be taken by the young people in company with their respective families.

Another dangerous occasion of sin is the saloon. Brethren, it is a shameful thing for anyone to frequent saloons, even without drinking too much, and many a young man has lost a good position from no other cause; when his employer learned that he was frequenting saloons he at once discharged him, although he never had seen him drunk. But for a vast multitude of others the case is infinitely worse; for them it is not man's friendship that is in question. Entering the bar room is in their case passing from the friendship of God into the slavery of Satan. The saloon is the place of brazen, boastful vice; the meeting place of the most hardened sinners; the place that is the terror of fathers and mothers who are bringing up boys; the saloon's threshold is the stepping-stone to other evil resorts; it is a place always under the suspicion of the police; idling and drinking there Saturday nights is frequently the cause of missing Sunday Mass; it is the place for squandering hard-earned wages. No wonder that our Holy Father the Pope and our Bishops, in the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, warn all of our people in God's name to avoid saloons. But in their name and in God's name do we earnestly admonish those who enjoy social drinking to set their faces away from saloons, as being in all likelihood a proximate and fatal occasion of sin to them.

We must warn you against indiscriminate reading. Reading newspapers is often a subtle form of the capital sin of sloth, a vice which breeds other vices with horrible fruitfulness. Behold that man; he is slack at his work and diligent at his idle reading. He forgets business appointments, but never his daily paper—a laggard and a dawdler and a failure. See that young girl; her ideals of life are wholly visionary, formed from the foolishness of novels and the scandals of the daily press. Instead of devotion to plain duty as a means of success in life, she dreams of adventures and romantic love matches. She soon finds home life dreary and hard work intolerable. The downfall of a large number of young girls is due to idle reading.

This is all the more deplorable—this visionary habit of reading as one's principal recreation—since there is so much good reading easily to be had. Every family may have a weekly assortment of good things to learn and new things to enjoy in a Catholic journal, and of the more solid sort of reading there is an abundant supply in the Catholic monthlies. A small sum of money will nowadays purchase a little home library of useful and entertaining books, both religious and secular. Many a one's health is undermined by devoting their leisure to poring over newspapers, when they should be enjoying the open air or some kind of physical exercise. The miserable alternative of idle, gossipy reading is too often attending theatrical plays or exhibitions of moving pictures—silly always, but sometimes positively hurtful to good morals.

Need we warn you against gambling, my brethren, which is now become a prevalent vice in all its big and little forms, from "plunging" in Wall Street to wasting one's nickels in slot machines—playing "policy," playing cards for money, betting on horse races. In all its grades it is wasteful, in many cases gravely sinful. No human shipwreck is so complete as that of one who is infatuated with risking money in games of chance. Such things breed idleness and dissipation as filth breeds flies. Chance games for money grease the wheels of the drink habit. They necessitate keeping evil company. They demoralize the Christian's conscience about honesty and dishonesty. Frequently such practices generate gross superstition, and their victim lives in an atmosphere of dreams, constantly studying omens of good luck—ending too often in the madhouse. Of course this is a vice defended by an active army of excuses. Hear them: the money is my own; the sums I risk are not large; it amuses me better than anything else; it is not a passion with me, and I can stop wherever I like. All such excuses are futile—notoriously admitted to be so except among those who suffer from the incipient stages of the fever of gambling. Are you inclined to risk money at cards or otherwise? Do at least this: say some prayer for God's guidance; try complete cessation of the practice for a limited time at any rate; and, especially, change your company.

With regard to occasions of sin, my brethren—and it is a matter of life and death importance to very many—the true Christian is like a person living in a malarious district; the air he breathes is tainted, and he holds good health only on condition of constantly using antidotes and disinfectants. So it is with you. Danger is everywhere about you, and your spiritual antidotes are steadfast resolutions made to God privately and through your Father confessors; your disinfectants are good company and innocent amusements.

Let us conclude with a bright example of resolute purpose to shun the danger of sin. Count de Rougemont was a noted duelist. St. Vincent de Paul converted him to a good life. In the excess of his fervor, he sold his estates and gave the money to religion and the poor. However, his sword, a valuable one, and the last and dearest object of his love, still remained. He could not cast it away. He would never fight again, on that he was resolved. But the sword was his ornament, the reminder of his position as a gentleman and a soldier, the token of his dauntless valor. One day while riding along the road, he was overcome with shame at such cowardice. He stopped his horse, dismounted, drew his sword, and broke it to pieces on a stone. "Now I am free!" he exclaimed, mounted his horse and rode home. One can easily see how much freer and better a Christian he had become.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Self-Denial.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

THESE are strong words, my brethren, affirming the Catholic doctrine of mortification, the crucifying of our flesh "with its vices and concupiscences" (Gal. v. 24)—truly the religion of the Crucified. Upon the practice of it, namely, the restraint of our appetites, the mortification of our native tendencies to an easy life, depends our spiritual welfare. But all men do not realize this.

To illustrate: the farmer and his summer boarder from the city take diverse views about crops. The city man says: The winter was mild, the spring was good, the summer is bright; why is your wheat so thin? The farmer explains: The winter was bad because it was mild; and the spring was too open; for a late frost and a succession of thawing and freezing hurt the young crop; what makes the wheat thick and strong is a steady cold winter with plenty of snow. It is so with our spiritual life. A cold, steady, snowy winter of self-restraint is necessary for our graces to take deep root and grow, and to flourish in our spirit's harvest time, in our inspirations and instructions and spiritual readings, our hearing Mass and receiving communion.

Indeed, my brethren, the ideal thoughtful man is one who is so absorbed in mental activity as to forget his bodily needs; study is sweeter than his food, thought more soothing than sleep. The mind of a truly rational being tyrannizes his body, reason enchaining appetite. If this be so with philosophers and scientists, much rather is it with true penitents. So says the Psalmist: "My tears were my bread, day and night" (Ps. xli. 4). Many a lover of Christ's poor forgets mealtime and bedtime while serving widows and orphans. Reason and religion ennoble us to that degree, that the animal in us is treated hardly with justice, never with partiality; and its clamors to be pampered are answered by derision. Of course all this should be inspired by the example of Jesus Christ, and, when privation is endured in works of mercy, it is to be sweetened by His infinite compassion for human suffering. When mortification is endured as atonement for our sins, then our pains are purified and elevated by the thought of our Redeemer's Passion and Death.

Someone might object and say, that the use of God's creatures should be free, because it leads us to Him Who made them, and Who bestowed them on us for our enjoyment. It is true that created things lead us to God. But it is also true that our inborn tendency is to misuse them. Used temperately, all creatures help us to know the Creator and to love Him. Everything that comes from God is a leader to God back again. But the chief of all leaders to God is He Who said of Himself that "He came forth from the Father and goeth to the Father" (John xiii. 3). On Him we must fix our eyes, after Him we must bend our steps. Now He was wholly guileless, and yet would not enjoy the good things of life, because He was perfectly joined to us, His guileful brethren. Therefore He renounced many innocent enjoyments for the sake of setting us a pattern, and of atoning for our sinful enjoyment of them. "Think diligently on Him," exclaims the Apostle. "Looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith, Who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2). Herein, again, is the answer to the objection that a life of self-restraint is unbearably sad, for the Christian's self-restraint is joyous imitation of His Master Christ Jesus, Whose company is the serenest joy ever known. But it is not gross joy. No joy is refined enough for a true man that is not distilled from our reasonable sorrows.

There are some created loves—let us gladly own it—which are especially well fitted to lead us to the Creator, such as affection for wife or husband, or for parents and brothers and sisters; or any other affection which is sanctified by religion. Such a love may be made a novitiate for Paradise. Very true; but even this joy, so refined and pure, may yet be a snare. How often are men hindered from justice to God and their neighbor by partiality towards members of their family. As is taught by our nearest and divinest Relative: "A man's enemies shall be those of his own household" (Matt. x. 36). There may be a bad side to every human enjoyment. Christian art, for example, elevates and instructs, and pagan art misleads and befouls. The study of science ought to mean contact with God's amazing power and wisdom in nature—and yet many scientists have lost God in wandering among the glories of His creation, as Adam lost God even amidst the glories of an earthly paradise. God is manifested in the life of nations, plain as day; and yet it is too true that much of the written history of nations is "a conspiracy against the truth." No culture of the mind leads to God except as the imitation of Christ leads to Him, namely, in the order of atonement, repression, taming, readjustment to original righteousness. Mere pleasure in the use of God's gifts is perilous even unto sinfulness. All pleasure, except what directly speaks to us of eternal joy, is lacking reason's full approval. In as far as it eludes our whole mastery, pleasure is a hindrance to integral manhood, and is injurious to the integral Christian spirit.

Who that thinks does not know that full meals, light work, long sleep, and plenty of everything is damnation? Who has joy in God in proportion as he enjoys creatures? Even among the saints perfect equanimity is absent from the most innocent relaxations. The royal road to joy is the way of the Cross. Long and painful abstinence from this world's comforts, every faculty of soul and sense of body trained and trained again to want of creatures and want of joy in creatures—this custom of life alone fits us for the pure joys of God. Desire of mundane things is our bane: pitch sticks most to hot fingers, and sin cleaves fast to a self-indulgent spirit.

We are not insisting, my brethren, that each and all of you must straightway set about a life of rigid self-denial. No; we are sketching the outlines of the Christian ideal rather than detailing methods and degrees in realizing it. That ideal is perfectly realized only by the more fervent few, described by à Kempis as follows: "They seldom go abroad, they live very retired, their diet is very poor, their garments coarse, they labor much, they speak little, they watch long, they rise early, they spend much time in prayer, they read often, and they keep themselves in all kinds of discipline" (*Imitation,* Book I., 25-28). And in all this order of things, thoughts of the life and Passion of Christ move through the mind like ministering angels, guiding the soul's intention as well as forecasting the joys of Paradise. Nothing has more surely the approval of heaven than this manner of life. The teaching of Christ is staked upon the verity of such statements as these: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17). "Woe to you that are filled, for you shall be hungry; woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when men shall bless you" (Luke vi. 25, 26). "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (1 John ii. 15). "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark viii. 34). "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground shall die, itself remaineth alone; if it shall die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). Take all this, my brethren (and it is but a gleaning of the field of the divine teaching of self-denial), and what kind of a life must a Christian choose? Nor need we forswear all joy because we renounce the grosser pleasures, for that which is pleasure to the beast within us is not worthy to be called the joy of the man, whose temperate enjoyments are many.

We must not necessarily try to imitate the detailed practices and penances of the Saints. Let us be sound and sincere in our principles about self-denial, and Christian prudence shall guide us safely in the details of practice. And a few suggestions will not be unwelcome to you. Manage to keep the rein upon appetite from first to last of every meal. Do it by little mortifications and without ostentation. But no man of candor should be ashamed of abstemiousness at meals, or of singularity of clothing and furniture in the interests of simplicity. It should be no nine days' wonder that a Christian keeps Lent and the Ember Days. Let us remember what we are rather than dread what men may say of us. Uniform and universal enjoyment of all that comes our way is the custom only of a sensualist or of an unthinking worldling. Be very open with your Father confessor about such things; and do not hesitate to mention details, whether for accusation or to obtain counsel. Say your meal-prayers with at least as much attention as you expend on eating your victuals. Never make the good things of the table matter of conversation. Do not eat fast, do not eat *too* slow. Even if in delicate health, manage to be content with what others eat. Never grumble at the table. Act thus for the honor of Christ and for the discipline of the flesh. St. Francis de Sales was no starveling, yet he says: "We should live as if our spirits were in heaven and our bodies in the grave." We may not reach so high a plane as that maxim marks. But, at any rate, every rational man should feed his body only for the sake of his soul, and "every Christian," says St. Jerome, "should so eat and drink as not to feel a distaste for prayer and reading of the Scriptures after rising from table."

II. Little Virtues.

"And they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

A very important lesson is taught in this brief sentence, namely, the duty and profit of caring for the little things of life.

Although the evangelist treats of one of our Savior's most stupendous miracles, he fails not to mention the crusts and crumbs of bread, the bits and scraps of fish that remained on the grass after the miraculous banquet was over. Though our Lord was so rich that He provided food for thousands by just saying words, yet He was not wasteful—He loved the little virtue of economy. He would place His Apostles on twelve thrones of highest honor, yet He would employ them in the humble work of picking up the pieces left after a meal.

Brethren, the Wise Man says: "He that feareth God neglecteth nothing" (Eccles. vii. 19). In fact the littlest duty is lifted up to God's height when we do it for God's sake. If God wills you to scrub floors, then do it for His sake with all cheerfulness, for thereby you pave your way to Paradise. God listens to our idle words—not without recording them against us. He watches our pouring out a drink of water at the table for one of the family—not without setting apart a heavenly reward for it. If you contradict others in your family chats, He is mindful of it against you; if you good-naturedly suffer another to contradict you, He sets it down to your credit in the book of life.

There is such a thing as giving up all things for Christ, and then wasting seven baskets of fragments—being, for example, a frequent communicant, and yet often unmindful of other people's convenience.

Do you know how our great Catholic missions to the heathen are maintained? Many thousands of missionaries and of Sisters are supported by little contributions. The millions spent on them with such glorious results, are made up of weekly pennies given by the members of the Propagation of the Faith.

Sometimes we meet with solid Catholics, regular in attendance at Mass and the sacraments, who nevertheless sit down to their meals and rise up again without a word of table prayers. "Oh, that's only a trifling devotion," they exclaim, if you chide them. But little as it is, it is God's right, little but precious in His eyes.

Consider Mary and Joseph in Nazareth. Brethren, the hem of that great Mother's garment is more precious than all the crowns of all the queens that ever lived. She was none the less her own servant as long as she lived—sweeping and dusting, sewing and darning, cooking and washing dishes—that beloved Mother of God's Son, that majestic Queen of earth and heaven. Joseph was the first prince of God's prime nobility. Yet he was only a country carpenter; and he made his living and that of Jesus and Mary by hatchet-and-saw carpentering. So was the Infinite God, our Lord Himself, a common workman, Who toiled and sweat like any other mechanic, gladly engaged in work that some of us would not "disgrace" ourselves with looking at. Meantime He was the brightness of the Father and "the figure of His substance, upholding all things by the word of His power" (Heb. i. 3).

Consider this: Whosoever is careful about little acts of virtue will value great ones with holiest reverence. Whosoever makes the sign of the cross slowly, thoughtfully, will have a big-hearted love for Jesus Crucified. Whosoever silently swallows his angry feelings, making no reply to an insult, will eat and drink the Body and Blood of the Lord with rapt devotion.

It takes as much power on God's part to create a little grain of sand as to create the sun in heaven. On our part the holy purpose which we throw into the littlest good work, the least kindly word or smile, indicates a wealth of divine grace within us, amply sufficient for mighty deeds of Christian virtue.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Purity of Heart.

"But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

"BEING made free from sin" is a condition of serving God with heavenly fruit. Fervor of loyalty to God is diligence in avoiding violation of His commandments. A painful knowledge of our shortcomings is dawning sanctification. Here is a striking version of this fundamental doctrine about cleanness of life: "The Paraclete Who desires to visit us is so holy that He would not come even to the disciples, until our Lord's bodily presence was taken from them, in order to show how utterly empty must be the temple in which He dwells" (Blessed John of Avila). What is the first requirement of man's holiness in God's sight? The purification of his soul from all ungodly things. That done, God soon establishes the practice of virtue there, and in due time ripens these practices into habits. But to begin with, cessation from sinfulness, great and little, is indispensable. This is variously named: purity of heart, a guileless character, a blameless life, a stainless record. Our Mother Mary had many splendid graces, but what, next to her motherhood, is her peculiar title? Immaculate—mere splendor of innocence. What is your peculiar hope at the end of life? That you may be of the number of those "who have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Apoc. vii. 14).

"Doth not God consider my ways," asks Job, "and doth He not number all my steps?" (Job xxxi. 4.) If God thus follows me with the sharp eye of love, shall not I study my own ways with trembling solicitude? And later on in the same chapter, the holy patriarch exclaims: "What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? and when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him?" Only this may I efficaciously answer: Lord, I have daily and hourly searched my ways with the searchlight of Thy truth, and I have constantly sat in judgment upon myself. My brethren, many indications of a happy death may be found in your life, but the elementary one is tenderness of conscience.

To admit oneself sure to fall into venial sins, and equally certain to rise up again and that as a matter of course, is a prime constituent of a perfect life according to the saints. These are surprised that they do not even fall into mortal sins. As to minor defects, "getting up again as often as we fall" is placed by St. Francis de Sales among the qualities marking "a good servant of

God" (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 354). Watch a gardener walking among his flowers; he is constantly pruning the plants, here a little and there a little; a gardener is optimistic by instinct, having a keen eye to perfect conditions of growth. So may we be in the garden of our soul, in which God establishes the plants of virtue, and in which He expects us to cut away whatsoever hinders their growth into flowers and fruits of divine love. Selfishness or vainglory, antipathies and partialities, a laggard mood or headlong rush—such things clutter up the soul's action and demand the use of the knife. How did the solitaries of the early Church become saints? They had the sacraments only infrequently, spiritual direction of men was scanty enough—they were usually alone with God. Two reasons for their holiness (apart from the initial grace of vocation) are evident. First, they were extremists in their hatred of sin, even the most trivial; every least tendency that was not from God and for God was ruthlessly suppressed. Second, a corollary of the first, their interior life was wholly free from hindrances to the divine action; God, therefore, entered in and took possession by His inspirations. To this end they and all other earnest seekers after holiness continually have implored God to embitter all joys that are not quite above suspicion of being mundane; with the prophet they cry: "Prove me, O God; examine me, and know my way. And see if there be in me the way of iniquity, and lead me in the eternal way" (Ps. cxxxviii. 23, 24). Such is the aboriginal particular examen—God's. Upon that we base our own sharp search for flaws in the texture of our conduct. God, Whose law is a lamp to our feet (Ps. cxviii. 105), will give us just as bright a light to return again upon our steps to find out how we came to stumble as He has done to prevent our doing so. God must build the house that is not built in vain, and watch the city that shall be in peace—build and watch and search and cleanse the house and city of our soul (Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2).

Blessed Henry Suso says, vainglorious spirituality is that of persons whose "intellectual light streams out-wards and not inwards" (*Autobiography,* ch. l.). The whole of God's work with man is thus stated by the prophet: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. l. 12). First, God cleanses our heart clean from sin and its tendencies. Then, and just in proportion to the progress of purification from sinfulness, does He infuse His spirit into our own, inspiring us to the practice of virtue. The cleansing process is what the soul itself is mainly concerned with, for in that it has its own part to play—the negative work of grace; and this is done most thoroughly when attention is paid to particular faults, systematically what is known as the particular examen, or by habitual and as it were instinctive watchfulness upon certain defective tendencies. Sophonias, the prophet, affirms God's approval of this practice as if it were His own: "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lanterns" (Soph. i. 12). Jerusalem is my soul, and God's lanterns are the remembrance of His holy commandments. The more simple and tranquil one's mood in doing this, the more careful will be the spiritual cleansing. It is an activity which seems all our own. Yet in none does God more surely play the principal part than in the revelation of a man's sinfulness to his weeping eyes. Nor does it degenerate into pious do-nothingness, for he that finds himself out for the love of God will not have long to wait before he finds out God.

In the art of war the conqueror is sure to be the general who knows best how to concentrate his forces. In the art of holy living the concentration of the faculties of the mind upon centres of danger is the guerdon of victory. As Solomon says: "The wisdom of a discreet man is to understand his way" (Prov. xiv. 8). It is the best friend in an emergency—this particularization of the sense of danger upon the point sorely threatened. Some temptations surge up like the tide of a filthy sea. To face God quickly and cry for rescue, excluding all but the sense of this imminent peril, is the resource of a proficient in vigilance. Consider the worth of this in battling with impure suggestions, with blind antipathies, with the raging thirst for drink, with the dull incubus of sloth.

Of a sudden someone enters the room; it is one with whom I have had trouble, or for whom I have an instinctive aversion. But in either case I am forearmed with charity, because forewarned by my prayers against this very danger, our Redeemer's point of view has been granted me. Whatsoever practice cultivates such alertness of attention ranks high in the spiritual life. A daily advertence to our most disquieting fault results in a habit of vigilance. As to just how this may best be done, and at what hour, and exactly where—these are important questions; but they are soon answered when we own that our purpose to make a particular scrutiny of a particular fault is an inspiration of grace. It is the focussing of a heavenly light. A microscope is of no use for broad and sweeping observation, but for minute knowledge it is indispensable. Now minute knowledge, especially of motives, is a necessary quality for advance in virtue, for honest and spontaneous contrition, for a firm resolution of amendment. God on His part concentrates the light, and I on my part fix my gaze. As God inflames my soul against a certain failing, against one more than another, so does He also bid me examine that one failing more attentively than another, with the result that I dig it up by the root, or I whittle it away bit by bit.

One need not, should not, be hurried. We must be ready to do such a work as this over and over again—just as we bathe an irritated eye over and over again. The present gain is spiritual ease, the future gain—just as sure—is a radical cure. In measuring the progress towards life eternal, one must reckon the inches and not the miles. He who fights with himself must fight long. Meanwhile (to change the figure) the weeds, though they are sure to grow, are just as sure to be ploughed under. But if the cultivator is never run between the rows, the weeds will eat up the soil and smother the corn. Solomon warns us: "I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man: and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down" (Prov. xxiv. 30, 31).

This doctrine that the main purpose should be to destroy evil things, and the subsidiary purpose to do good things, is the first one taught in Cassian's *Conferences,* for many generations a book in the hands of every aspiring Christian. In the introductory chapter the Abbot Moses lays down specialization of faults as the foundation of a spiritual career, meantime cautioning us about the motive—to keep God's honor steadily in view. It startles one to hear that we should rather choose to cure evils than practise virtues. But let us bear in mind that the two are never really separate, for as expelling bad blood means the letting in good blood, so does the remedy of a fault involve the practice of the opposite virtue.

What is an upright intention? One that goes right up to heaven and to God. Now that is our general tendency, but it is too often a vague one, more a feeling of devotion than a positive devotedness. It has many implicit reservations, so many that there are days and days when the exceptions by their number disprove the rule. Would that our heart were cleared and cleaned of every motive save God; in that case we should be shrines of the Holy Spirit. One serves God and the sweetness of devotion; another, God and the family interests; a third, God and the aversion he feels for evil men—only after a bitter conflict are we wholly for God, God alone. Only when our eyes are blinded by tears of adversity can we say with truth: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord" (Ps. xxiv. 15). O Lord Jesus Christ, Who didst live and die for our salvation, making that loving motive one with Thy Father's purpose that we should be saved, grant us, we humbly beseech Thee, to live and die, to act and speak and think, ever and always purely out of reverence for Thy sovereign majesty, and love for Thy divine bounty. Amen.

II. How to Recreate.

"The wisdom of a scribe cometh by his time of leisure; and he that is less in action shall receive wisdom" (Ecclus. xxxviii. 25).

Brethren, we wish you much joy during your "time of leisure" this summer. We hope that each one of you will have a vacation and a good one, and that you will return from it much benefited in health and rested and calmed in spirit. That such may be the case, and especially that you may not be forgetful of God meanwhile, we earnestly advise you to spend some time every day thinking, and reading, perhaps even conversing, about divine things. This practice, which may be called recollection of soul, is a form of prayer, and a high one. Let no child of God say: "Thank fortune, I have nothing to do to-day but amuse myself." In truth the best relaxation is that which is had in thinking and talking of heavenly things. At any rate, while seeking for rest and recuperation of body, keep your mind preoccupied with our Lord Jesus Christ. This need be no strain upon it, but a gentle inclination to be glad of His goodness.

A perfect Christian, when called away to amusements, is like a busy man who must meet an acquaintance for a social chat. He sits down and he talks and laughs, but mentally he is still absorbed in his business affairs, and only his good manners hinder him from showing it. He who relaxes his mind should not lose his taste for his devotions. He who prays only when he is on his knees prays but very little, said an ancient Father of the Desert.

And what better safeguard against temptation can one ask than the frame of mind described by the Psalmist: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare" (Ps. xxiv. 15). Tendencies of a religious kind should have fair play in our life. These need not be obtrusive, least of all make us meddlesome with others, but ready at hand for such a thing as a quiet fifteen minutes of spiritual reading, or a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament. A recently beatified saint has said that "the difference between the unspiritual soul and the spiritual one is that the former gives himself to outward things and the latter only lends himself" (Blessed Julie Billiart).

This readiness for holy influences assures one of consolation in time of distress. It soothes irascibility: whosoever feels God near him is furnished with the soft answer that "turneth away wrath" (Prov. xv. 1). Hereby one is gay without being silly; one is at rest without indolence. St. Bonaventure bids us imitate our guardian angels, "who, while attending to the exterior ministry of guarding us, are never drawn away from interior attention to God."

By such means one's bodily leisure is one's spiritual gain. How different from those who come back from vacation demoralized. They begin wrong by picking out a spot in the country where they cannot have Sunday Mass, and they live and act there as if anxious to disguise their religion. They fling themselves into amusements with frantic eagerness, even sinful amusements. They forget God almost totally, missing daily prayers habitually: God is for the city and the devil for the country. Not seldom they are content with dangerous company. When they get back to their regular occupations, they are not rested so much as they are dissipated, their nerves unstrung, and their conscience defiled.

Let it not be so with you, my brethren. Give some part of your time this summer to religion, do it every day; and be sure that when you return home you will find that your vacation has been of as much benefit to your soul as to your body.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. The Inner Voice.

"For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

According to these words, my brethren, and are they not startling words? we should carefully observe our thoughts, for now and then the Holy Ghost will make us spiritually aware that we are His children. "Be still, and see that I am God" (Ps. xlv. 11), said God to the prophet. And now St. Paul bids us to be still, and God will tell us that we are His sons. With such divine messages does God reward the silence of prayer. We sometimes hear of a household so peaceful and full of mutual love, that it is called a heaven on earth. Our heaven on earth, did we but know it, is the innermost chamber of the soul. So teaches St. Teresa: "As our divine Spouse has a dwelling place in heaven, so He has one in the soul, in which none but He may abide, and which may be termed a second heaven" (*Inner Castle,* Stanbrook, VII. Mansions, ch. i.). Herein do we learn that a pious life is really such a close union with the eternal Father, as to be the beginning of celestial bliss. How different the lot of the good and the bad in this world. To one who gives himself up to the practice of virtue, the Holy Spirit often addresses—not words like human speech, but mysterious invitations of love, so tender that after we get them there seems to be nothing worth thinking of except God. But to a worldly-minded man, the thought of God is as of some dread power, indeed, but whose being is unreal and dreamlike.

Now you might think that such a condition as the Apostle speaks of, involves a hiding away from everyday life, and also that it is full of delusions—it is thought to be the trait of visionaries. But it is not so. The chidings of conscience are God's voice: are they for hermits only? and are they confined to visionaries? Satan, indeed, sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14), and whispers to our souls real delusions about virtue. But these are anything but peaceful. Instead of drawing us to the tranquil love of God, they impel us to a vehement and wild activity; especially do they breed trouble with our neighbor and dissensions in families, even downright hatred. Again, the first word the evil one speaks within us, when he is masquerading as a good spirit, is that we must avoid seeking counsel, or seek it only from turbulent spirits. But when the

Spirit of God giveth testimony to my spirit that I am His son, He insists that I must behave worthy of my divine lineage; the very echo of His voice is that I must love His other children, my brethren in God.

Sometimes, indeed, God's interior direction is not at first quite clear. This, however, concerns particular guidance, to do or not to do a certain thing. But when were you ever doubtful that you should be sorry for your sins, not so much because God would punish you as a just Judge, but rather because He had interiorly reproached you for insulting your heavenly Father? Brethren, remorse of conscience is changed from cringing fear to yearning love the moment you realize that God is testifying to you that you are not His slave but His son. The very commonplaces of repentance for sin, the everyday keeping of the Ten Commandments, are not they the work of a child of God? Are not they overseen by our heavenly Father? Are not they to be done from such motives as inspired the Only-begotten Son of God in winning our redemption? If one but interiorly casts himself into the arms of God as the prodigal did into the arms of his father (Luke xv. 11-32), no act of our lives would be less than an excursion from time into eternity: every motive would be love, every purpose everlasting loyalty to our Redeemer.

The teachings of God in the outer order, such as Holy Church constantly delivers, are, according to our Savior, to be received into the very depths of "a good and perfect heart" (Luke viii. 15). Otherwise we cling to sounds only, as if a man would preserve only the envelopes of the letter he had received. We must take God's commandments and the Church's precepts into that retired room of our heart where truth is adored. Beauty of religious thought may anywhere be admired, but only in the soul's holiest sanctuary are those sorrows for sin uttered, those vows of filial affection registered, which move the might of God to be merciful. Opinions about virtue and about sin are formed and are dissolved like fog banks in the morning sun; but the core of the heart contains the jewel of faith; there is stored the virgin gold of resolute purpose to be all for God—God alone. In such far-removed places of the soul faith in God's truth is enshrined, and hope in His promise, and plighted troth in His spouseship. There do we hearken to the "Spirit Himself" giving testimony to our spirit. Père Hamon calls it the place "where the council of the heart is held, where all its designs are decided upon, where the impetus is given to all its movements—it is there that we must withdraw and render ourselves attentive to the word of Jesus Christ, Who bids us lay it up in our hearts (Luke xxi. 14). It was thus that the Blessed Virgin listened (Luke ii. 19), it was thus that Mary Magdalen (Luke x. 39) listened at the feet of Jesus" *(Meditations for Wednesday after Sexagesima Sunday)*. We do not say that the direct call of God to virtue, or His warning against vice, can at once be distinguished from the mere impulses of guileless nature; but later on they surely will. The prophet Samuel mistook the voice of the Most High for that of Heli the priest four times over. But each time he answered: "Here am I," for his soul was obedient to any good word. But by the counsel and judgment of Heli the young prophet is at last made aware of a divine message. O with what immensely greater obedience does he now respond: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Kings iii. 4-10). It is thus that God's external guidance through devout friends, and especially by one's Father confessor, manifests the meaning of interior impulses to good, identifies God as the Speaker, distinguishes the human from the divine. This is especially true in the graver concerns of a devout life, such as vocation to the priesthood or to a religious community.

Bear in mind, my brethren, that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and that the study of His life enables us by degrees to recognize Him among the claimants for our inward attention. This thought is especially of value in dealing with our defects. My vices and His virtues must be brought into vivid contrast, yea, into bitter conflict, so that, for instance, His humility may lead me in an onslaught against my pride. His Spirit it is that alone persuades me that it is better to give up my rights than to defend them—better to yield to another's opinion than to argue him down. First I may strive against His inspirations; little by little I am shaken; and then at last I am routed and overcome by Him—the Spirit of Jesus has captured me and has made me meek. He is what He is and I am what I am; the study of Him and of His yielding and humble ways, makes me what I ought to be, namely, an imitator of His meek and humble heart (Matt. xi. 29). Is there anything more beautiful than human badness overcome by divine goodness by dint of the persuasiveness of heavenly wisdom and the patience of heavenly love working sweetly in my most interior soul?

After our Lord had discoursed affectionately to His disciples on His Father's readiness to hear our prayers, He concluded with these words: "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke xi. 13.) The good Spirit, the Spirit of all goodness, the very God of goodness, is what our heavenly Father grants us in due time, and as a reward for constant prayer for divine guidance. "Keep looking at God" is the method of simpler and holier prayer prescribed by Baltazzar Alvarez. It seems an easy method, and it is so, provided one is devoted to an inward life, and is fixed and firm in his purpose to be a true servitor of the Holy Ghost. It is the state of mind of one to whom God has granted the petition spoken of by St. Augustine: "Ah, for Thy mercy's sake, tell me, O Lord my God, what Thou art to me!" (*Confessions,* Book I., ch. v.)

It behoves us, my brethren, to accept seriously our Redeemer's doctrine: "A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from above" (John iii. 27). Good intentions that take root deep and permanent are the only ones that bear eternal fruit, and these are planted by God's own hand. Herein let us distinguish our own good thoughts and feelings from the influences of the infinite Spirit. "The heart of man disposeth his way," says the Wise Man, "but the Lord directeth his steps" (Prov.

xvi. 9). A devout habit of life soon clears the air around us. Presently the currents of thought are found to be gently moving in one particular direction, even whilst we may be striving to breast them and to swim against the stream. Our outward associations of a pious kind rise as lighthouses to hinder misguidance and interference on the part of the demon or by the human spirit. We cling more closely than ever to those whose company is grateful to our nobler purposes; and this latter trait is frequently decisive of all our doubts. Prayer for guidance made in common with deeply sympathetic friends does not ever remain unanswered. If to this be added some bitterness of suffering, then the brightness of God will soon begin to shine.

It is said of the Apostles that while waiting for the Holy Ghost they "were persevering in one mind in prayer" (Acts i. 14). Bereft of the company of Jesus in His risen glory, they clung the more fondly to His Mother and to one another. Deserted by Judas the traitor, they turned all the more affectionately and trustfully to the faithful ones; and not a soul so much as mentioned their own former cowardice nor the weakness of Peter. They were bent with grief, absorbed in mutual affection, and spent the hours in common prayer to God, as they gazed into the darkness from which they expected the coming of God the Holy Ghost. In due time He burst joyfully upon them, and possessed them finally and forever with the fullness of His gifts. It shall not be otherwise with us. Only after bereavement, after abandonment, and in darkness and sadness may we most surely trust to be quite clearly enlightened: then it is that God's Spirit "giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." Indeed it seldom happens that He favors us with any great degree of His warmth and light except after trials and sorrows. It is a heart chastened with sorrow that God loves to visit. Our most interior graces, and all that is best in the religion of the Crucified, must be received in the order of atonement.

II. Self-Conquest.

"If by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

Brethren, by these words St. Paul promises us a robust spiritual condition, if we will but watch our bodily appetites and check and restrain them. He bids us dig out the weeds of bodily self-indulgence with the spade of mortification, and with the same spade plant the Christian virtue of self-restraint in the garden of our soul. Of course this is to be done principally for the love of God. It might well be done out of love of true manhood, for everybody knows that a soft way of living weakens character. But the religious motive is infinitely a higher one; it is imitation of Jesus Christ. Ours is the very same spirit of sacrifice that inspired our Savior to suffer death for us. The Christian is moderate at table because Christ his Master was "poor and in labors from His youth" (Ps. lxxxvii. 16) for our sakes, and always lived very frugally. We wear plain clothes, we yield the place of honor to others, because Christ, Whom we devotedly love, having all honors at His command, set them aside out of love for us, and "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2).

Who that is a true disciple of Jesus pampers his body? On the contrary, he is on the lookout for opportunities to place reason in entire control over appetite. When appetite clamors for indulgence, then we hearken to Christ, Who said to His followers: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke ix. 23).

Reason says eat sparingly; appetite says eat all you can get and shout for more. A sensible man, therefore, smites his lower nature with the whip of reason, for it has passed into a proverb, that if one wishes to eat long he should eat little. But now comes the grace of God and strengthens this plea of reason for moderation, and elevates it into a religious motive. Not to live long but to live forever, does the Christian bridle his appetite.

Someone may say: I cannot mortify my longing for food or drink. We answer: Do you earnestly desire to do so? Cherish that desire and turn it into fervent prayer. Daily and systematically beg to obtain the grace of self-denial. The result is not doubtful.

Some good works are pleasing to nature and are easily practised, such as affectionateness, generosity to friends, love of country, courage in danger. But only to the higher sort of natures is self-restraint attractive. It is a virtue suggested by the finer kind of thinking. To a religious mind self-restraint is an elementary good. Not only the sages of our faith and its heroes, but the dullards and the cowards of Christ may learn "to suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. viii. 17).

Medical science says that appetite for food is a sign of bodily health. The science of the Gospel says that scruples about indulging appetite for food is a sign of spiritual health. This is a case in which scruples are praiseworthy. We do not speak here of regular fasting, which Providence may interfere with by the necessities of nature or the duties of our state of life. But nothing interferes with, but rather every wisdom, human and divine, enjoins moderation at table ever and always. To many a Christian moderation at meals is very hard; it is equal to a black fast, so common is the practice of over-eating. But consider its penitential value. Are you just now repentant from a sinful life? Cut down your food only a little, do it once a day; do it as a self-imposed penance, and you will have an excellent means of perseverance in God's grace. Are you struggling to repress a quarrelsome disposition? Keep a sharp outlook for the convenience of others at table, and sacrifice your own taste and pleasure there for the sake of your companions, and soon you will be able to bridle your tongue and soothe your hurt feelings. St. Vincent Ferrer teaches us: "A general rule in all things temporal, all things having reference to our bodily life, is never to follow our own will, when we perceive it to be in opposition to that of others."

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Holy Mass.

"My house is the house of prayer."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

My brethren, these words of our Savior were spoken in reproval of the buyers and sellers in the temple of Jerusalem. They apply with double force to God's temple in the new law, in which God's Son is offered up to His Father in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. God is present here not only constructively and figuratively; not only by proxy through His priesthood as in the ancient temple, but really present, just as really as He was present to His Mother Mary in the cave of Bethlehem. She must have said to Him—O with what motherly tenderness—"I adore Thee, my Son!" and He would answer by the divine glances of His eyes: "I love thee, My mother!" So now, you say to Him in holy Mass: "I adore Thee, my God;" and He answers by the divine whisperings of His grace: "I love thee, My brother!"

Well do we call it the sacrifice of the Mass, for in it He continues the sacrifice of Calvary: as to His Passion and Death it is both commemorative and real; as to His love, it is the plentiful redemption (Ps. cxxix. 7) promised of old—the most real and most plentiful love of God, more abundant in our souls than the sunlight in the sky at noonday. Would that our dispositions of faith and love were as real as His Eucharistic redemption, Whose grace flows out from the altar in a flood of cleansing and healing upon all mankind. If my gratitude to Him is real gratitude, then my whole self is real and my life is divine. Real: to the Father this presence in Mass is the real Son, the Only-begotten; to Jesus' Mother holy Mass is the Real Presence of her Child; and it is most real to the angels over whom she is the Queen. Is it so to you, my brethren? Well may you assist at Mass in the spirit Cardinal Newman prayed that he might have as he offered the Holy Sacrifice: "O holy Mother, stand by me now at Mass time, when Christ comes to me; as thou didst minister to thy infant Lord; as thou didst hang upon His words when He grew up; as thou wast found under His cross. Stand by me, holy Mother, that I may gain somewhat of thy purity, thy innocence, thy faith; and He may be the one object of my love and my adoration, as He was of thine" *(Meditations)*.

Is there anything in this world so real as the Catholic Church? Her Faith is the solid reality of truth in men's souls; her existence is the one perpetual reality in human history. Now the sacrifice of the Mass is both the germ and the fruit of all Catholic life, whether it be organic in Christ's entire mystical body, "compacted and fitly joined together in Holy Church," or as our personal life which walks "in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness" (Eph. iv. 16; v. 2). It is from Calvary through holy Mass that we are given the Real Presence, Holy Communion for the living and the dying, the divine silence of our churches, our heart's precious treasure in the Catholic priesthood. If real means essential, then holy Mass is that form of the love of God which essentially inspires all our acts: it is real presence, real power, real hope, real love, real joy, inasmuch as His infinite reality is concentrated in the gift of His Only-begotten Son. I wish that His presence at Mass were as much a reality to me as it is to His eternal Father; I wish that it meant as much to me as it does to Himself.

Take this comparison—your dear mother. How grateful you are to her memory for her constant care of you in your tender years of infancy. Yet sometimes, for all her efforts to stay awake, her head would droop and her eyes close: she could not do what her heart longed to do for you; she was human and must sleep. But Jesus, though all human is yet all divine: His love can conquer sleep. With more than a mother's, with all of God's infinite endurance, He never knows sleep in His watch over you, His fretful child; and later on in your wayward boyhood, passionate youth, and rebellious manhood—it is all one to Him. You are His Israel: "Behold He shall neither slumber nor sleep that keepeth Israel" (Ps. cxx. 4). He loves you always. He constantly calls you to Him; He incessantly forgives you your sins. He is ever enshrined in this home of your soul, your church. God is in heaven, the beatitude of all its millions, everywhere at once, all to each one, perfect bliss, final and eternal joy. God is on earth; from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, in every place there is the sacrifice of the Mass, a clean oblation (Mal. i. 11). He is your joy on earth as a foretaste of your joy in heaven. He is our Father Who art in heaven, our Brother Who art on earth.

Years ago a man told us that in his boyhood in Ireland, he used every Sunday to walk several miles through a wild mountain gap to assist at Mass, his father leading him by the hand. In a secluded part of the mountain they passed near a large flat stone, and always, "as we came to it," said the man, "my father turned towards it and bowed down reverently. When I had grown a little older," he continued, "I asked him one Sunday why he did so. He answered that the spot was a very holy one to him. For in his own boyhood during the times of persecution, it was there that the people of his parish assembled on Sundays, and holy Mass was offered on that rock, the altar stone and the other sacred furnishings of the holy sacrifice being placed there, and the priest standing before it; watchers being meanwhile placed on all the adjacent hilltops to give warning of the coming of the soldiers. Therefore my father loved it well, and always saluted it affectionately." Brethren, the holiness of all life is in the Mass; therein the Body and Blood and Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ sanctifies the whole world. When He calls us to assist at the holy sacrifice, He but gratifies His dearest wish, thus tenderly expressed to His Father the night before He was betrayed: "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 24). It is here that the greater divine love is found, or rather finds us. At holy Mass the aspiration of the young man or woman to give up all things for God, and enter the seminary or the religious order, is inwardly ratified by the Holy Ghost, for here best is taught the difference between things earthly and things heavenly. Here the devout soul experiences that second and final transformation into holy fervor, calmer, indeed, than the original attraction to a devout life, but with the calmness of the peaceful skies—an irrevocable departure from all motives but those of love pure and simple. Here are converts made by a divine infusion of truth rather than by human argumentation; yea, and here do convert-makers receive their graces by the secret vocation of the Good Shepherd; the supreme missionary of all souls is upon that altar.

What virtue of Christ Jesus is not here shown with uttermost perfection of love; but brotherly love above all. It is love most humble. For even such poor types of human excellence as you and I, my brethren, are treated by Jesus at Mass and communion as if we were splendid angels. It is love most submissive. His will is merged in ours and in that of our priest. From place to place He goes at our lightest wish—He waits long for us, He hurries fast for us lest He should keep us waiting. His time is all ours. He is never preëngaged when we would seek His counsel. And, O, it is a love most patient. He is silent under injuries; He is meek towards the rude and thoughtless and lukewarm; He is forgiving towards the sacrilegious. And what condescension to our dullness; for great as is the mystery of the altar, it is so insistent in its sweetness that the grossest nature is won to its appreciation. And it grants the very essence of faith. Of all the teachings of God to man, the Mass is the most homelike. What little boy or girl ever found any trouble in believing the reality of the marvelous event that happens at the elevation in holy Mass?

The very remembrance of Mass is a spell of love for God and man. Thousands whose remoteness from church or whose illness hinders personal presence, have a singular joy in reading the Mass prayers at home. Under heaven there is no music so sweet as the chanting of its sacred liturgy. Its intervals of silence are the most powerful of appeals to retirement into the heart of God. Here are the awful struggles of remorse ended by resolves of repentance as efficacious as the rod of Moses, for the dead rock of sullen viciousness is here smitten by the pierced hand of the leader of God's people, and floods of sorrowful tears pour forth at His command. Alas, my brethren, how all this reproaches us with our lack of appreciation of God's goodness in holy Mass! Truly may we apply to ourselves the words of St. John the Baptist, addressed to the Jews, who, however, at that time were blamelessly unaware of the presence among them of their Messias: "There hath stood One in the midst of you, Whom you know not" (John i. 26).

What is the best homage I can pay Jesus? Imitate Him in the best favor that He does me. I should be to Him in life and conduct what He is to me in the Eucharist: He should have my body and my blood and my soul. All the divinity of His grace within me should return to Him in manifold fidelity and coöperation: in every time and place, in waiting and working, in living and dying. What is the best service that I can do to my fellowmen? Imitation of the service that Jesus does them in the Eucharist, that holy banquet in which He is consumed by men: may I long, as the Apostle did, gladly "to spend and to be spent" (2 Cor. xii. 15) in men's service. My life among them, may it remind them of Christ's Passion and Death as His Eucharist renews the same in me.

II. The Hardened Sinner.

"Because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Our Savior spoke these words with bitter tears, for they foretold the doom of Jerusalem, the city He loved above all others. He had often called its people to repentance, but, taking them as a body, they had hardened their hearts. The outburst of welcome they gave Him on Palm Sunday was no sign of a deep-seated love, but rather a superficial enthusiasm due to the splendor of His miracles.

It is so with many Catholics. Some signs of religion are about them, like the sweet odors clinging to the garments of one who has been working in a perfumer's laboratory. Religion clings to a hardened sinner by its fragrant memories, or by his futile admiration of its virtues, after its practice has left him forever. Have you never heard a drunkard eloquently praise the virtue of temperance? An adulterer admires purity. A man who never goes to Mass will yet force his children to do so. He has neglected his Easter duty, but he still says his night prayers. The fragrance of the fruit lingers in the rind. But by the lapse of time and little by little these religious tendencies, like the post-mortem twitchings of the nerves of a man just dead, cease; and at last the soul is given over totally to spiritual death. Many visitations of Christ's mercy have been wasted upon the sinner, and at last His tears are shed over it in vain. He is constrained to say with His prophet: "I will stretch out My hand against thee,......I am weary of entreating thee" (Jer. xv. 6).

Delay of repentance means final impenitence in a multitude of cases. With few exceptions eternal punishment is the result of repeated disregard of warnings. Long-continued sinfulness, even though interrupted at distant intervals with half-hearted reception of the sacraments, is more than anything else the cause of eternal damnation. Sin is sin; but year-long sinfulness is a chronic spiritual malady. Habitual sin is to the moral sense what hardening of the arteries is to the physical system—a sure portent of death. Meantime this trifler with God's oft-repeated warnings grows into the delusion that somehow or other he is going to be finally saved. But, says blessed Job, "God hath given him place for repentance, and he abuseth it unto pride; but God's eyes are upon his ways" (Job xxiv. 23). As Jerusalem heard its last call and rejected it, so does the sinner in like manner; and the tears of Christ that are the hope of the penitent, become the malediction of the obdurate.

A soul long addicted to sinfulness is like a man long struggling in the water. A life preserver floats near him and he hears voices encouraging him. He even grasps the means of safety, but as he is drawn towards the boat his benumbed hands let go their hold and he is drowned. So is a soul lost. A hardened sinner gets into such an evil state that even if he goes to confession the chances are that his sorrow for his sins is but partially developed, and he soon relapses, and is finally and forever lost—his soul is benumbed with iniquity. We meet with men who sin by perversity and repent as a formality; who would go to heaven by receiving the sacraments as an excuse for breaking the commandments. O how earnestly should the wicked man pray to God for such a contrition as shall absolutely transform him and make a new creature of him; according to the prayer of the royal penitent: "Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. l. 12).

You know that a man of slovenly habits loses the difference between personal cleanliness and filthiness. So does one of sinful habits lose the difference between guilt and innocence of life, until at last he is as faithful to sin as a patriot to his flag. We meet with men who fight as hard for drink or impurity as a mother would for her child. And even after the power of actually sinning is worn out and gone, the remembrance of former wickedness is made to do service instead of the positive enjoyment—the will to sin remains as strong as ever. To follow good advice becomes an impossibility. Even so much as to admire virtue in others is not easy for one who has practised vice by choice, and by preference for many years. O my brethren, "To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your heart" (Ps. xciv. 8). Let us not be like the wicked and ill-fated city of Jerusalem, which was the object of the divine malediction because it was the willing victim of its own obstinacy in sinning.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. The Sinner's Arrogance.

"Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

In this famous parable, my brethren, the Pharisee and the publican both prayed, and only one was justified. The prayer of the Pharisee was that of a righteous man, indeed, but he was self-righteous; the publican's was that of a sinner, but of a penitent sinner. And the humility of the one saved him in spite of his former misdeeds, whilst the pride of the other wrecked him in spite of his good deeds.

The lesson, so divinely taught, is the danger of being puffed up by our own virtue. The Pharisee has been a proverb of meanness and of baseness of soul, and yet he gave alms and fasted and prayed assiduously—a type of a whole class in our day no less than in our Lord's. Let us be on our guard; for the poison plant of pride lurks in ambush even amid the roses and lilies of virtue. We need to cry to God with the prophet, that He may guide us in our prayers and in our charities to know the worth of humility: "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth; they have conducted me and brought me unto Thy holy hill, and into Thy tabernacles" (Ps. xlii. 3)—brought me, that is to say, like the publican and not like the Pharisee. All that we have, we have received from God, and we are strictly to account to Him for everyone of these gifts. They are the items of God's bill against us. If we boast of virtues we become like a merchant who publishes his liabilities to the world: our credit is gone. We ought rather to hide our virtues, and to tremble at the thought of the time when our divine Creditor shall say, pay what thou owest: "Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer" (Luke xvi. 2). Truth and light—what a heavenly boon they are, that we may get things set right in our minds as we deal with our Maker about our virtues and vices.

Humility is that virtue which begins with thanking God for His graces to us because He is good, and ends by scolding ourselves because we are unworthy of such graces. Meanwhile by acknowledging our own misery we do honor to our divine Benefactor's goodness to us. Never shall we know God's adorable goodness till we contrast it with our own contemptible meanness. No man's love of God is true and bright till it is paid Him at the expense of his own love of himself—that alone brings God's goodness into clear relief. Gratitude, wonder, praise, indeed every form of love of God is born of contrast between Him and myself, especially as I consider God incarnate in Jesus Christ. Humility is the grace of taking facts as they are between God and myself, and being glad that God is infinite and I am puny. It is genuine truth, discreditable to me but unspeakably glorious to God's tender affection for me, His partiality, His indulgence, which is in no wise explainable except by the infinitude of the divine mercies. "O Divine Mercy! Couldst Thou bear with me, if Thou wert not infinite?" exclaims Father Thomas of Jesus (*Sufferings of Christ,* xxxi., 6).

What a misery, my brethren, for a man aspiring to be entirely a friend of God, to be deluded about the difference between God and himself, posing to himself, (and perhaps to others) as one thing, whilst all the time he is really something different and very much worse. Therefore God works my sanctification by enlightening me about myself and Himself as related one to the other. On this knowledge He founds the infusion of His love, which causes me to walk in the light of truth (1 Thess. v. 5). This results in the sadness of disenchantment on the surface, but in the underlying joy of religious truth. Towards our neighbor humility cures us of that spotted fever of the soul called points of honor, a malady infesting even pious people, of whom St. Teresa says: "God deliver us from pious people who strive to serve God, yet who care for their honor or fear disgrace" (*Way of Perfection*, Stanbrook, ch. xii., 7). The Saint adds that this defect spreads among devout persons "as quickly as foam gathers on the sea."

Many a vice is indebted principally to pride for its hatefulness. Now it goads us on to talk loud, again it stings its neighbor by contemptuous silence. When depressed it is melancholy, when joyful it is obstreperous. It prates of honor and practises meanness. Boldly it tortures the sensitive feelings of others, cravenly it flees from a fair fight. If it obeys it is with a haughty protest—it will not do even a good thing according to another person's plan. Pride knows the secret of pious disobedience and disobedient piety. It can outwardly conform to lawful authority and interiorly resist—opinionated, wrongheaded, self-willed; according to God's word to His patriarch about Israel: "And again the Lord said to Moses: See that this people is stiff-necked" (Exod. xxxii. 9). Humility, on the other hand, is simply and squarely obedient in manner and in action, because it enjoys pliancy of heart, wishes to please, is kindly and obliging; minds the rights of others, and forgets its own. St. Gregory the Great thus characterizes the opposite vice: "Pride is full of valor in giving offense, but cowardly in taking it. It is slow to obey, though importunate in demanding the limitations of its duty, but negligent in performance. Prompt to meddle with what does not concern it, resentful of interference by others, impossible of guidance against its own tastes and inclinations. Craftily pretends indifference to offices and dignities, so that it may be forced into accepting them—loves to have what it dearly longs for thrust upon it violently, fearing contempt if it exhibits ambition."

It is vainglory to boast of anything. But if a boast may ever be indulged in, it is that of one who, like St. Paul, can say: "We suffer persecution, but are not forsaken" (2 Cor. iv. 9). Yet even St. Paul plainly never left the whip of self-distrust out of reach, "lest," as he says, "I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27). Take the case of persecution by friends. We do not mean false friends, but true ones. Pope Pius VI. was a very holy pontiff, and a warm friend of all good men and good movements in his day, a sad enough day, to be sure, for it was that of the French Revolution. Yet this saintly pontiff, deceived by a man of truly awful wickedness, dealt the meekest man of his age, St. Alphonsus Liguori, the hardest blows a Catholic could receive, except the open anathemas of Holy Church. After the pontiff was rightly informed of the case, and the Saint was dead, Pius exclaimed in bitterness of soul: "I persecuted a Saint!" But in truth his persecution was the occasion of the sublimest virtues of St. Alphonsus, and the crowning ones of his marvelous life—humiliations of the most dreadful kind borne with the most perfect patience. Unwittingly but most effectually the Holy See had itself prepared the best evidences of heroic sanctity afterwards presented in the processes of canonization of St. Alphonsus.

We not seldom behold the work of God in the setting aside of one of His servants that another may take his place, perfect his work, and win men's applause. Our Savior warned His Apostles of this, saying: "It is one who soweth and another who reapeth" (John iv. 37). When you are about to gather the harvest of joy that you have sowed in tears (Ps. cxxv. 5), another by God's appointment displaces you. He is preferred before you by God and man; he gains the whole credit of what you made possible, planned, began, and carried to completion. Then you must say of him what St. John the Baptist said of our Lord: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 30). Nor is he always in every sense worthy, this man who grows before your friends' eyes as you fade out of their sight. Often enough he is by what seems mere accident put in possession of the place that you earned by toil and hardship. Herein you must "rejoice with joy" at your displacement and extinction, as did the Baptist about his. His disciples were made Christ's Apostles, and he himself was dragged off to prison and ruthlessly murdered. He bore his effacement calmly, in order that his humility might fertilize the tree of life Jesus was planting in Israel. But consider, my brethren, the humility of Jesus Himself, taking His place as He did in the long line of the poor humanity that John was baptizing in the Jordan. The Holy Ghost enlightened John to know Him, and, all abashed and distressed, "he stayed Him and said: I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering, said to him: Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfill all justice. Then, he suffered Him" (Matt. iii. 14, 15). St. Francis de Sales thinks that the Baptist's humility far surpasses in heroism that recorded of any of the Saints.

St. Philip Neri had for penitent a certain Sicilian named Tomaso, a man of gentle blood and high worldly position. The Saint led him to such a height of perfection, that he came to look forward to the employment as sweeper in St. Peter's Church as to an immense honor. After a while he was overjoyed to obtain the humble place, and he continued for many years to sweep there daily like any servant. Indeed he never left the great edifice, except when he visited the Saint for instruction and to make his confession. At night he slept in his clothes on the floor of one of the chapels (Baccis, *Life of St. Philip*). So he lived and so he died, showing the humility claimed by the prophet: "I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. lxxxiii. 11).

Sometimes it happens that Christians mistake their timidity for humility, leaving good things undone under pretense of being unworthy; but in reality this is not meekness, but meanness, the kind called cowardice. Some one suggested to St. Teresa that her writings might be attributed to vainglory on her part. She answered: "Even if I should be misjudged, so long as God is only a little better praised and known, let all the world hoot at me." How little she was liable to be spoiled by her fame as a spiritual writer, is shown by the origin of her *Autobiography*—her greatest book, and furthermore one of the Church's greatest books. She wrote it only under the compulsion of obedience, and with infinite reluctance.

And she complained—of what? My brethren, she complained that by performing this task she was prevented from spinning! (*Life,* ch. x., 11.)

Again it happens that pride masquerades in the weeds of meekness, when one who is really ambitious of place and power and honors, yet affirms that he seeks them because he cannot but recognize his real fitness for them. Alban Butler teaches that a desire for office is a first and final proof of unfitness to possess it. This is especially true of ambition for dignities of a religious kind.

II. Self-Distrust.

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

The Pharisee in this day's Gospel was vainglorious, even at his prayers. But the publican, on the contrary, was so distressfully humiliated by his sins that his whole prayer was a frantic plea for mercy: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Now, my brethren, what concerns us particularly is that our Redeemer sets this poor wretch up as an example for our imitation, for, if we are not publicans, we are penitents, and this humble man is our Lord's model penitent.

Pray to Jesus for such a contrition for your sins as will overwhelm you with self-contempt. "Prove, O Lord, and try me," exclaims the penitent King David, "burn my reins and my heart" (Ps. xxv. 2). As if to say, Lord, show me my sins so vividly that my face shall burn with shame, and my heart shall sink down well nigh to despair. A good degree of humility is necessary for true sorrow for sin, indispensably necessary. As pride is the essence of every sin—for is not every sin an arrogant revolt against God?—so humility is the essence of contrition, and therefore the main thing to be sought after in repentance and confession.

Nor does this breed thoughts of despair, unless it be despair of our own unaided strength to resist evil. For Christian humility thinks as high of God's love for us as it thinks low of our own wickedness. Once St. Philip Neri was heard crying out: "I despair! I despair!" His friends were shocked; but presently he added: "I despair of myself, but I trust in God." This great virtue is based on knowledge bright and true—knowledge of God's infinite goodness and our own miserable meanness. But this is a wisdom that is strictly religious, as little understood by the worldly-minded Christian of our day as it was by the haughty Pharisee of our Lord's. "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," exclaimed our Savior, "because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Luke x. 21).

As contrition is untrustworthy without self-distrust, so is perseverance impossible. It is a divine proverb that: "Pride goeth before destruction; and the spirit is lifted up before a fall" (Prov. xvi. 18). It is the man who is utterly shamefaced in confession who keeps the promises he makes there, for "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter v. 5). First give up confidence in yourself; and then you may rest firmly upon God's promises of help. Temptation seldom succeeds save when aided by the delusions of self-conceit.

Cardinal Newman says that "In this world evil follows good as its shadow." The name of that evil shadow is legion. But mostly it is pride that dogs us after repentance. After confession the penitent sinner's steps are tracked—not so closely by sensuality or drunkenness or spiritual sloth, as by the vain conceit that he can easily stand his ground against temptation. The one who may count on perseverance, even the ideal Christian, is he not a man after our Lord's own heart? Now of His heart He says: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29).

Close to our Savior's divine heart was our poor publican, who dared hardly creep inside the temple door, nor ventured so much as to look towards the altar, and whose prayer—perfectly efficacious—is the far-famed plea of mercy: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

A confession in which I compare myself with Jesus Christ is the truest and the best, for it candidly acknowledges that by my sins God's rights have been outraged; that is the whole meaning of a good confession. After such a confession one can sincerely affirm: "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and in Thy truth Thou hast humbled me" (Ps. cxviii. 75).

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Faults of Conversation.

"He hath done all things well; He hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

My brethren, our Lord's miracle gave speech to a dumb man. No less a miracle would it be if He gave you and me His Gospel as a rule to go by in our conversation, which is a broad field of spiritual achievement, a field beset with miseries worse than dumbness, abounding in opportunities for holy works, some of them equal to martyrdom.

A Christian conversationalist is one who can take a snub and never strike back; he can tell jokes at another's expense and never hurt charity; he mingles in and does not absorb the recreation; he has virtue enough to ask pardon for even innocently hurting another's feelings; he never interrupts; he complacently suffers interruption; he is incapable of contradicting; he respects age; he reverences learning; he bows to authority; the rights of others, be they absent or present, are as sacred to him as his own; he is good-natured with the ill-natured; he readily sits down to chat and as readily rises up to be silent; he practises a multiform charity in his talk because he has the Gospel of Christ in his heart. Why, my brethren, Holy Church need not go out of this arena for materials of canonization. How truly doth our Redeemer say: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. xii. 37).

Justified, indeed, by our words, but also condemned. For in conversation faults of a thousand kinds are committed. Have you not noticed them in others? Your friend insults you easily, sometimes without perceiving it; he is ridiculously conceited; he converses really with himself whilst pretending to converse with you; he ignores your remarks totally, yet forces you to listen to him, aye, he shows annoyance if you do not let him fix you with his eyes that he may spray you with his bitter verbal concoctions; he is angered if you observe the silence he crowds you into, and angered if you break his monopoly of the talk; he is easily angered anyway; he says silly things, talks wild, and is giddy; he chides you if you talk seriously; he *always* talks about himself; he is ponderous and acts the oracle; he is sarcastic and his tongue cuts deep; if you mildly object to his propositions, he says to you: "Try to be sensible."

Many faults of conversation are suggestions of evil against the absent, the innuendoes and the other tongue-drippings which scald the good name of those who are helpless because they are not present to wield their weapons of defence. I may hate my enemy and do him foul injury with my tongue. But if it be done face to face it may be palliated thus far: it is open give and take, it is a stand-up fight. But if I haunt his reputation by an ambushed and prowling hatred, by ironies and questionings—the very ghosts of uncharity—then I am to be ranked low even among demons. I am not the open air "noonday demon," but the sneaking friend that treacherously transacts his hellish business like a ghost, and "walketh about in the dark" (Ps. xc. 6)—in the back alleys of gossiping conversation.

We meet with talkers who answer to the prophet's accusation: "The poison of asps is under their lips" (Ps. xiii. 3). They live on poison. A rattlesnake dies of its own poison if it enters its blood. But a detractor flourishes on moral poison of his own brewing. They love it, they are always athirst for it. Against such a one the further accusation of the Psalmist is pointed: "Thou hast loved malice more than goodness" (Ps. li. 5)—a whisperer, a busybody, a tattler. Nor need it be a lying tongue that does the evil; this epicure of gangrene may never tell a lie, and yet be damned to deepest hell for sins of the tongue, an unscrupulous malinger scrupulous for truth-telling. He would force everyone of us to walk abroad clothed in his general confession. A guarded tongue? To him it is an unmitigated misery; it would be his lips bored and padlocked. The prophet prayed: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door of caution round about my lips" (Ps. cxl. 3). To the talker of men's miseries this holy watch and caution, this gracious restraint of charity, is intolerable and impossible; it is scrupulosity, hypocrisy. The Apostle's stern injunction: "Speak evil of no man" (Titus iii. 2), if obeyed, would rob this hangman of his daily bread.

It is a pitiful thing when my words bring tears of chagrin to one of the company and ripples of laughter to the others: some must weep for the amusement of others, and I am the cause of it. What is the effect of my sarcasm? Some inwardly curse me, all inwardly fear me. "Shall two walk together," asks the prophet, "except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) Walk and run and eat and drink and work and play together—this we all mutually must do. Yes, and suffer and pray together—this we all ought to do. And in it all shall we not breathe an air of peace and mutual affection? Shall we not constantly borrow and lend that cheapest and yet most precious of all the commodities of the human heart, good wishes and pleasing words? Or shall we lay ourselves open to the Apostle's reproach: "If you bite and devour one another; take heed you be not consumed one of another" (Gal. v. 15)—namely, by suspicions, complaints, tearing the bandages off the wounds of ancient family quarrels, deepening natural repugnances into running sores of aversion. Long after a bitter word is said, it rankles in a memory permanently embittered. Withdraw a bitter insult and apologize for it, then make your act of sorrow to Jesus Crucified, and the harm you did your own soul is healed; of that you may be sure. Not so sure of healing the hurt done the one whom you insulted. The divine memory is reversed in your favor, and in that record your humility has effaced your pride; the fire of the love of Jesus has burnt away your sin, and has written over the place your words of sincere contrition. But your victim—will he imitate God in this? Will he act upon his memory in like manner? This heart you have hurt is a mystery you cannot fathom, whereas the pardon of God is plain as day.

Mark the demon's work in dissensions among friends, especially in families. "By the envy of the devil," says the wise man, "death came into the world" (Wisd. ii. 24). How bitter is the malice of an envious spirit. Envy of even the incarnate God was the sin that turned angels into devils. Envy of man's happy state in Eden caused the tempter to waylay and overthrow our first parents. And what but envy of Christ caused the awful crime of His Crucifixion? O God, banish envy from our hearts! Establish a new Eden there and in our families, so sweet and kindly in word and deed that the fiend of dissension shall not dare to enter it.

How bitterly does the evil one hate peace! He loves hot disputes among relatives and associates. Most of all he would cause misunderstandings and misgivings about religion, and his first rank of assassins are doubtful talkers concerning doctrines of faith or nearly of faith. His second class of servants are sound in the faith but unsound in charity. These are intruders upon the divine judgment seat, self-appointed constables of God's court of justice, detectives, and turnkeys. They watch you with suspicious eyes. They converse with you about third persons, hoping to find you at enmity with them, and they misconstrue your words into something offensive to the absent, but sweet to their own depraved taste, so as to furnish a tale-bearing conversation. Both kinds and all other kinds of disturbers does St. Paul mean, when he prays: "And the God of peace crush Satan under your feet speedily" (Rom. xvi. 20).

Consider the reverse of this. The kindly spoken man is a capitalist, who like the richer partner in a firm, finances all conversation with golden words of peace. " Silence," says the proverb, " is golden." But if this be always true of the soul's tranquil hours of prayer, it is not always true of the Christian's duty to his fellows—allowing for the rare vocation of the Carthusian. Silence is golden, but talking need not be leaden. A chat with friends recreates my mind, withdrawing it from intense introspection. My thoughts are often less friendly company than the words of even a chance acquaintance. A bit of conversation softens gloom. The visit of a gentle soul who is a ready talker is sunshine and joy to my heart, nay, it is often the elevation of my spirit to God. There are those whom God has given me to take His place in consoling me, soothing, counselling, and warning me; and to each of whom I can say with the bride in the Canticles: " Let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely" (Cant. ii. 14). Sometimes, indeed, we might say: Better I had always kept silent. But would I wish that of certain others? How dark and wide a vacuum in my life would that not mean?

The conversation of the learned is often a better teaching than their solemn lectures, just as the offhand discourse of an orator is not seldom his masterpiece of eloquence. We heard a bright priest say that the after-dinner chats with his professor fitted better later on into his work as a preacher and confessor than the set discourses of the classroom. Bishop Camus was a familiar friend of St. Francis de Sales, and jotting down notes of the Saint's artless and often humorous talks, he made a book of them; and a saint-making book it is, *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales.* And thus is approved the saying of Solomon, that " A peaceable tongue is a tree of life" (Prov. xv. 4). Nearly all of the wisdom of the Fathers of the Desert, the quintessence of a prayerful life, is made up of odds and ends of their conversational wisdom, gleaned by pilgrims during visits to their solitary shrines. Our Savior was often a preacher, but incessantly a converser; His best wisdom was given His Apostles in informal talks after His public auditory had been dismissed. Mary and Joseph were the first and principal recipients of His message from on high, and this was made up of conversations at Nazareth from His infancy to His baptism in the Jordan. What a glorious privilege, thus to sit down familiarly with Incarnate Wisdom and exchange question and answer with Him. When the two disciples at Emmaus saw Him vanish from their eyes at "the breaking of bread," they could say only this of Him: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke xxiv. 32.) St. Jane Frances de Chantal, in her deposition about the holiness of St. Francis de Sales, says: "He was regarded by all as the most peaceable soul ever known." What an enviable reputation! A certain man once bitterly criticized and even condemned the Saint in a public discourse. Meeting him afterwards, Francis approached him and said to him: "I know well that you bear me ill-will; I do not ask you to excuse yourself. But I assure you that if you had plucked out one of my eyes, I would look at you kindly with the other." Brethren, is not that incident a gem of conversational charity?

The moment a friend falls sick be sure to visit him. A friend? Visit him be he foe or friend, most especially if he be God's foe, a man of abandoned life. He may have avoided you in health, afraid of your brotherly admonitions: you have him securely in illness; he is your prisoner. If the illness is not serious, it may be good policy to say only a little about religion in your talks with him. He will be glad of that, and he will try to entertain you, relieving his mind while discoursing of his pains. This may be the case for several visits, but meanwhile your visits and your conversation sweeten his drugs, smooth his pillow, win his gratitude. Soon he will begin to talk religion of his own accord, and you can then practise your apostolate of conversation which is at its best in the sick room. Some gain is very certain, the final success hardly less so. If he recovers, you are on a better footing with him; you have surely won the outwork of the citadel of his obstinacy. If he does not recover, your chats with him, begun early and repeated often, soon borrow the holiness of death; God's grace has entered the twilight of his existence with your affection, and it has spoken to him in the gentle accents of your conversations. O how many sinners are thus softened and saved, trophies of words and looks and pleasant smiles endowed with the wealth of holy charity—cheap to him who gives, priceless to him who gets. The worst sinners we have ever known have thus been saved, the priest presently called in spontaneously, the sacraments received with overflowing fervor. Before illness, defiant and scoffing; often by the visits of a true friend and his bedside talks, the sick man's heart is gradually melted with truest contrition, and finally is radiant with heaven's beams of holy hope. The sermons of mighty preachers often fail to move sinners to repentance—sinners in the flush of health are too often either habitual procrastinators or open scoffers in the face of the divine warnings. But a sinner stricken down by the hand of God, and close bound to a sick bed, is already half penitent, and nothing so effectually as a devout friend's conversation finishes the work of salvation.

II. Apostolate of Conversation.

"And the string of his tongue was loosed; and he spoke right."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

To enable us to speak right the Son of God must loosen our tongues by a special grace, sometimes by a miracle of grace; for our conversation is too often frivolous, sometimes uncharitable, seldom devoted to spiritual things. Not many laymen realize that there is such a thing as an apostolate of conversation. Mere talk—there is no such thing to a true-hearted Christian. His very prattle with his children is full of edification as well as happiness. A wise man strives hard to instruct his company as well as to amuse them. The very crumbs from a rich soul's table-talk, feed plentifully another soul hungering for truth.

There is even some advantage in the conversational apostolate over that of the public platform. Conversation is the personal force of a man brought to its highest potency. The advantage of truth over error is highest when most concentrated, particularized, segregated from the crowd. The contrast between certitude and doubt is most vivid when exhibited in two or three typical specimens. One at a time is a rule of true progress. My public lecturer is as far above me intellectually as he is physically, when I hear him from his elevated platform in a great assembly. But when he and I are alone he has me at close quarters, he projects truth into my soul at point-blank range. This holds good when he is an ordinary friend, and his only advantage over me is that he is right and knows it, and I am wrong and know it, or at least suspect it. If we are on a footing of equality as to education, and I am wholly unequal to him as to the great verities of time and eternity, then his feebleness of arm but sets off the mighty force of his weapon; just a humble neighbor of mine, and yet equipped by his Catholic truth to be my angel of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

David had no advantage in the armor of Saul and in his spear, " for he was not accustomed to it " (1 Kings xvii. 39). But he knew all about the shepherd's sling, and could pick skillfully the right sort of stones from the brook, and thus he could slay Goliath. Many a theologian's armor and spear fail, where the gentle force of kindly talk wins a godlike victory.

The primary rule of religious talk is not prudence, nor caution, nor reticence, nor peacefulness, but affectionate interest in your hearer's immortal destiny. The word of command is not, " Take care," but " Forward." What good can I do him? What happiness can I give him? What delusion can I save him from? These are the purposes in hand. If I am not a crank I shall easily be kindly; if I am sincere I cannot help but be truthful and candid. Say to men, "Don't bully, don't interrupt, don't sneer," and you have said enough in the interests of prudence. But you cannot ever say enough to hearten me to take hold of devout topics in ordinary conversation.

At a certain street corner in Rome there is seen to-day a bronze slab with this inscription: "Here Philip Neri chatted about God." This commemorates the Saint's street corner apostolate. For sixteen years, all that time only a layman, did Philip talk in the streets to idlers and chance acquaintances about God and heaven and hell and truth and error, and the beauty of virtue, the hatefulness of vice. Only under dire compulsion would he become a priest; and this was not only from humility, but also because his life as a talking layman was so amply fruitful of souls.

In recreation, in business, in the family circle, in the round of daily intercourse of all kinds, a true man is eager for propagating truth. Providence will not fail both to give him opportunity and to bestow upon his zealous conversation a full harvest of souls.

Only a comparatively few public speakers can ever be engaged in the conversion of America. But there can be an uncounted multitude of private talkers—nay, there must be—whose influence shall necessarily be as universal as efficacious.

When an old-stock Catholic recalls the beginnings of his religious life, he forthwith thanks God for the zeal and intelligence of his parents. They were his apostles. St. Augustine, in praying to God for his mother's soul, exclaims: "She was twice my mother, in the flesh that I might be born into this earthly light, in heart that I might be born into light eternal;" and he speaks of her household as "a living branch of God's Church." Nor are mothers and fathers the only quiet, domestic messengers of God's truth. For the same Saint tells of the profound effect of conversation with friends upon his mind in changing from error to truth. Parents and friends, sweet whisperers of love in our childhood, pleasant traffickers in holiest truth during the friendly converse of early and later days—all these are members of the laity; yet are they vicars of Christ for our little circle as long as they stand true with His Vicar of the universal Church.

What man or woman ever was first taught about God by a priest? or ever so powerfully influenced towards God by any priest as by some devout relative or friend? The *Ecclesia docens* is centred at Rome; its truth-teaching springs out in fresh waters of life in each diocese and parish; and yet it depends on humble lay people for the distribution of its healing and cleansing floods in our families and in all private circles of life.

As to method, the simplest is generally the best. And what is the straightest way to every honest heart? It is to offer him a ride in a chariot whose four wheels are the four last things to be remembered. You will never stray far from the road to doctrinal persuasion, if you keep in that holy vehicle. Men want salvation; and all the adornments of controversy, as well as all its fundamentals, are valued in proportion to their bearing on the mighty issues of death, judgment, hell, and heaven. The lessons of Calvary are the prime theses of all learning. Show, therefore, that for a man to be wrong as to truth means to be astray as to salvation, and true doctrine is placed where it belongs: inseparably joined to a happy death.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Parental Discipline.

"And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord" (Eph. vi. 4).

A HIGH standard of parental duty is hereby inculcated, my brethren. It sets before us the heavenly Father's own tenderness as the inspiration of correction and good order in the family. St. Francis de Sales was once reproached with being too gentle with certain imperfect men. He answered: "Is it not better to send them to purgatory by gentleness than to hell by harshness?" In dealing with childern love forms the plan, and firmness carries it out. Parents differ; one sees the guilt of the child's bad conduct and nothing else; the other sees the misfortune of his bad conduct and nothing else; the ideal parent sees both. Is not this the nearest approach to the divine model? Hard words are sometimes needed; if they come from a kind heart they wound without slaying. Occasionally it happens that just correction is a failure because it is void of good example; and it fails at another time because it is sauced with bitter words. What says the Wise Man? "My son, in thy good deeds make no complaint [scolding?], and when thou givest anything add not grief by an evil word" (Ecclus. xviii. 15).

Meanwhile the supreme merit of home life is in dealing at once justly and affectionately with children, especially when they are unruly. The *Imitation of Christ* says: "It is no great thing to be able to converse with them that are good and meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all. And everyone would willingly have peace, and would love those best that agree with him. But to live peaceably with those that are harsh and perverse, or disorderly, or such as oppose us, is a great grace, and a highly commendable exploit" (Book II., ch. iii.). These are famous words. They apply point-blank to our dealings with cantankerous children. These, to be sure, are not always in a mood to be touched by kindness. But if they are in the least degree amenable then they may be helped, and that wonderfully, if we will but be content to suffer sharp contradiction, even insult from them. Many a willful child is hardened against obedience by the parent's bitter tongue. Bear in mind that "A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Prov. xv. 1); and that the memory of the father's mildness will be the remorse of a willful son's quieter moments.

Let us study the following praise of charity, and note how all of its high attributes apply to the training of children. "Charity is patient; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never falleth away" (1 Cor. xiii. 4-8). Here are many tests of parental love; and they apply equally well to parental zeal for good order. Household rule is patient, is kind, is incapable of resenting—even of remembering—an insult, is unconscious of self. A father's very soul is hopeful of the best when confronted with the worst conditions. Such a parent endures all delays, is never disappointed, never gives up, and finally succeeds.

The most costly viands may be spoiled in the cooking, and the cheapest food may be made appetizing. So it is in the moral life of the family. What is good for the children must be got ready in the parent's mind as one prepares food in the kitchen, and on that depends whether the children will take it greedily, or obstinately leave it untouched. The patriarch says: "The ear trieth words, and the mouth discerneth meats by the taste" (Job xxxiv. 3). Do not serve up your correction raw. Pause and consider and take counsel, for you are dealing with those who, though their judgment is immature, have a sense of your contempt for them which is unfailing. The Son of Sirach thus speaks of the supreme sweetness of a kindly voice: "The flute and the psaltery make a sweet melody, but a pleasant tongue is above them both" (Ecclus. xl. 21). The music of Paradise is the voice of the angels, and the music of earth is the sweetness of an affectionate parent. It is the divine orchestra of the human heart. It is the heart of a man that inspires his voice, attuning his tongue either to the harmonies of Paradise, or to the clamorous discord of the pit. A good deed done in utter silence is indeed pleasing to God and man, but when a kind sentence accompanies it, it awakes a gracious anthem of thanksgiving in the soul of the recipient. Hence St. Paul says: "Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart" (Col. iii. 23). It is from heart to heart that correction must pass before it can find lodgment in the mind. We lately received an illustration of this, taken from medical practice. "My son took his first outing last Sunday," writes an anxious mother to us, "and came down to see me. He has had an extremely dangerous attack of inflammatory rheumatism. He is still very lame. Once during his illness the corps of doctors at the hospital notified their chief (on his return from visiting an out-patient), that my son was beyond recovery; they had exhausted all means, and death was inevitable. He came at once, heard what remedies had been tried, and then said: 'No, there is one thing that has not been done, and I will do it now.' Whereupon he injected something (my boy named it, but I have forgotten the name) into the heart itself, and at once he recovered, and will now do well. God be thanked!" It is so in dealing with spiritual maladies. A heart-cure cleanses the whole being of the child of its venom. Aim at the heart with a stroke of love, and the stroke of your rod will never make a festering wound of hate. That surgeon lances an ulcer in vain who knows not how to cleanse the wound he makes with antiseptics. That parent cuts into a boy's soul with the knife of God's fear in vain, who knows not how to kill the germs of resentment with the unction of love. Even the most well-deserved correction must be followed by the solace of kindness. Listen to Job: "When I sat as a king with his army standing about him, yet I was a comforter of them that mourned" (Job xxix. 25).

St. John of Avila, the foremost missionary of Spain in the beginning of the sixteenth century, when asked by a priest how he might succeed in making an impression on sinners, said: "What can I say to you, except to tell you to love our Lord deeply." And indeed, my brethren, this is doubly true of successful work with children, being our Redeemer's own method. Remember what he said to St. Peter when appointing him supreme pontiff of His Church: "Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs" (John xxi. 15). Christian parent, you are entrusted with the pastorate of the lambs of Jesus Christ; endeavor by the prayer of love and the sacrifice of love to be fitted for it as well as was St. Peter for saving men's souls.

Parents should be exceedingly solicitous about how their own conduct appears to their children, who see everything and forget nothing. If the son could express his mind to the father, it would sometimes be done in these divine words: "Hypocrite! Cast first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's [son's] eye" (Luke vi. 42). A good text, surely, for the meditation of all superiors, but first and especially of all parents.

A parent must enforce his rule and maintain good order, a condition necessary to common welfare. Granted; and let that be secured. But St. Ignatius was the sternest disciplinarian in the whole Church; yet he never spoke to his subjects but with unfeigned moderation and mildness. The "discipline of the Lord" is more than mere discipline. The perfect flower of Christian authority springs from this root: Whenever a parent thinks of a child, he instinctively thinks of doing him some good turn. From the fountain head of all lawful authority we have this: "The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. xx. 28). As if to say: I seem to command My followers, but in really they command Me. I am come to give them gifts and to minister to their welfare. They are created to serve Me and obey Me, yet I consider Myself as made for them. When a parent is actuated by that feeling he is a good one; not otherwise. Does he administer a reproof? It is only under compulsion of duty and as a last resort. Is he granted obedience? It seems to him a personal favor, and he is grateful in all sincerity. As to the case of a rebellious child, the law must indeed take its course. But nevertheless no one can claim to be an imitator of Jesus unless he willingly endures the company of Judas. Perfection easily condones the imperfections of others. Fondness for self on the part of parents is the root of many family quarrels. Love of dominion makes us bully others. Love of one's children is hardly possible in a heart addicted to self-worship. Gentleness towards others, if it be true and constant, can find room only in the heart of one with a low opinion of self.

What is meant by that well-regulated zeal for virtue we hear so much of in the lives of the saints? A well-distributed zeal. As far as the correction of faults goes, we should be so much occupied with our own as to have little time to think of others. The economy of fault-finding is a divine gift. Now the first and almost exclusive claimant for zeal is myself: let every parent hold to that. It is hard to express how very much humility has to do with parental love. Peace depends almost totally upon our having a low estimate of our own rights. Sensitiveness, which is an implacable foe of love, is the withdrawal of our feelings from the common stock of human joys and sorrows, especially in the family circles. The parents' feelings and rights are to be dedicated to the bodily and spiritual welfare of the children.

II. The Lessons of Death.

"All things that are of the earth, shall return into the earth: so the ungodly shall from malediction to destruction" (Ecclus. xli. 13).

Sin and death, my brethren, go together, for the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). First came the sin of Adam, and then the penalty: "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. iii. 19). And in our text the Son of Sirach couples the ungodliness of the sinner with the destruction of death. Sad thoughts are these, but salutary ones, and worthy of our timely consideration; timely indeed, for to all, as our Lord warns us, "the night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4), the night of death. Let us consider its lessons.

In old times when a judge sentenced a criminal to be hanged, he placed on his own head a black cap, and then he pronounced the fatal words, finally committing the prisoner to the death cell. Brethren, your priest is not your judge—except to absolve you in the tribunal of mercy—alas, he is himself one of the condemned. But yet we priests represent God, and He it is Who gives us your death sentence and bids us pronounce it upon you. You are all condemned to death. You are gathered here in this church in the cell of the condemned. To each one of you God's messenger speaks: "Thus saith the Lord God: Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live" (4 Kings xx. 1). The executioner of that sentence never leaves you. You see him not—that relentless officer of divine justice—but death is near you every moment of your life. The step of death is the noiseless march of time. When we know a friend of ours is near his end we say: His time is come. Time, that he enjoyed as one enjoys the company of a faithful friend, was all along his enemy, yea, his deadly enemy, creeping closer to him every moment, finally laying his iron grasp upon him, and smothering the vital sparks within his bosom. Going along a road you come to a crossroads, and a finger board tells which road of the two you are to take to get to your destination. Not so in life's journey, in which there are no crossroads; every road leads to the same destination—to the cemetery; whatsoever direction we go, every step we take brings us closer to the grave.

St. Margaret of Cortona was a beautiful young woman, trained to a modest Christian life. But she became acquainted with a libertine, and was led astray. At the end of several years of sin, the visits of her accomplice suddenly stopped. Her heart misgave her, and after a few days of agonizing suspense, she saw coming towards her God's messenger—it was her evil companion's dog; the animal was much frightened and whining pitiously. She followed the dog to a lonesome woods, and there lay her paramour dead, a corpse robbed and murdered, dead in his sins, pierced and killed with many stabs. O God what a sight! Instantly she thought of her own heart. She read her lesson true and honest. She knelt down and prayed to God to forgive her the sinful deeds she had committed, and from that hour devoted herself to preparation for death by a penitential life, which soon became heroic and miraculous. Doubtless, my brethren, we are not likely to be so rudely treated by Providence as she was. But one by one our associates in life, whether good or evil, are taken from us, and when we attend their funerals, we should learn in each case the great lesson of life, namely, the certainty of death; according to the teaching of the Holy Ghost: "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting, for in that we are put in mind of the end of all, and the living thinketh what is to come" (Eccles. vii. 3).

My brethren, our preparation for death should be quite different from that of some Christians, for these during life undertake to serve both God and the evil spirit—God by an occasional confession and communion, and the devil by doing wicked things between times. Tell me did you not give God up this past year? In answer you say: No, by no means; I made my Easter duty, and I went to Mass pretty regularly. Well then, I will ask a second question: Did you then give up Satan this past year? Ah! that question gets no answer —except it be in the harsh tones of the evil one: Did he give me up? Why, he was absolutely mine to do or not to do whatever I bade him the whole twelve months, except a couple of weeks about Easter time. Brethren, let us ask ourselves what shall be our thoughts at the point of death, when Satan shall clamor to be given possession of our soul forever.

Or it may be a question of a man of a yet darker shade of guilt, one who has long quite ignored God. In spite of his Catholic training he has seldom gone to church, never in many years to the sacraments. He has fancied he could get along without God all his life and yet die a happy death. But now at the end God closes in on him from every side. He took spiritual things easy in life; he constantly postponed them; and he argued himself into the delusion that he could do so safely. And now that death is upon him, what will be his state of mind? My brethren, we meet with such cases, in which a life spent in presumption of God's mercy is ended by a death in despair and in blasphemy.

We have already quoted the prophet's warning: "Set thy house in order!" Your house may have cost you five thousand dollars. If it were valued at five millions, could it purchase you five minutes additional time on your deathbed? Could it purchase you a sound pair of lungs to take the place of those now fatally diseased? Or could millions and hundreds of millions of money purchase you the grace of a happy death, true sorrow for your sins? Let us be very humble-minded, my brethren, at the thought of death, so certain to come, so uncertain as to the time and place; for it may come very suddenly. "How often hast thou heard related," says the *Imitation of Christ,* "that such a man was slain by the sword; another drowned; another falling from on high broke his neck; this man died at the table; another came to his end while he was at play? Some perished by fire; some by pestilence; some by robbers" (Book I., ch. xxiii.). When did you open a newspaper but that you found sudden deaths recorded there? Did you never think that it might be your turn some day to furnish that commonest of all news items? your turn to-morrow, perhaps.

And, my brethren, is not any kind of death, however lingering it may be, in some sense a sudden death? Who in his last illness has all the time he wants, all the time he can profitably use before dying? Such a one must be a saint indeed. When death is heard outside the house fingering the door knob, who but a saint would hurry to let him in? O who would not crave a little longer preparation, once more to go to confession, once more to receive Holy Communion, when the last hour is come?

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Thanksgiving.

"And Jesus answering, said: Were there not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is not found one to return, and give glory to God, save this stranger."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

THE duty of thanksgiving to God for His favors to us is inculcated in this day's Gospel, my brethren, and in a striking manner, for the poor Samaritan, miserable semi-pagan as he was, and with infinitely fewer graces than the nine Hebrew lepers, had more gratitude than all of them put together. Great was his reward; for the Lord gave his soul the true faith as he had given his body sound health; for He said to him: "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

This lesson applies to making a return of thanks for any and all gifts, but especially to thanks for the pardon of our sins in the Sacrament of Penance, and for the Body and Blood of Christ received in Holy Communion. Sincere souls practice it with much joy. Notice how communicants linger after Mass, all quite absorbed in prayer; some reading the acts of thanksgiving after Mass, some reciting the rosary, some just saturating their thoughts with God in tranquil meditation. Notice, again, how penitents leaving the confessional go straight to the altar rail "to give glory to God" for the cleansing bath of the Precious Blood which they have enjoyed in the Sacrament of Penance; and then they spend some time in quiet prayers of gratitude.

Thanksgiving even for little favors is good breeding between you and your friends; it is not mere ceremony between you and God, for it is debt paying. The thankless Christian is one who borrows heaven from God, and does not pay even a *Deo Gratias* in return, does not feel, much less express, his sense of gratitude for having received it.

Deo Gratias! Thanks be to God! O Jesus, Thou hast given me "justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17), which Thy Apostle calls the "kingdom of God," in confession; what shall I return to Thee? Thou hast given me Thyself in communion; how shall I show my gratitude? Two things I have to give Thee, one of which is time: a little shall be thine, if only a quarter of an hour; and the other thing is a full heart of loving prayers. Lord, these shall be Thine: they are not much, but they will be the earnest money of a great treasury of love I shall pay Thee in Paradise. Time flies quick in the company of a beloved friend; it flies from me to him with golden wings of affectionate words; it shall thus fly from me to Thee, O Lord, after communion. But I must ask myself why it is that time goes slow in the company of Jesus? for surely we two are friends. The reason is that this friendship is fed by faith and not by sight: it is my lack of faith that slows the wheels of time, as my laggard soul drags out the minutes of thanksgiving after communion.

A soul just absolved from sin instinctively chooses fervent promises for the future as his thanksgiving to God. Oftentimes what one has hesitated to promise as he kneeled at the feet of his confessor, he spontaneously promises God before the altar a moment afterwards. Are you discouraged as you face the future? If you offer God hearty assurances of future fidelity by way of thanks for your pardon, you may rely upon Him to help you through even to a good end. Say to your heavenly Father with the royal penitent: "I am Thine, save Thou me, for I have sought Thy justifications" (Ps. cxviii. 94)—sought them and found them in Thy priest's absolution. God's honor is now involved in your perseverance, for you have committed to Him your future hopes by trustfully promising amendment. God's honor, we insist. For your soul is now doubly precious to Him, and His honor, His triumph over His enemies, His joy in the eternal salvation of one whom He so tenderly loves—all this is now at stake, and the victory is due you on account of your gratitude to Him for His mercy. "God," says the Apostle, "loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7); and to prostrate yourself with the Samaritan at the feet of Jesus, and give Him glory by your thanksgiving for being cleansed from the leprosy of sin, is your gift, O so cheerfully offered Him.

The beginning of perseverance in grace is thus our *Deo Gratias* after forgiveness. God will do His part, there can be no question about that. "Being confident of this very thing, that He Who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6). But will we do our part? A work well begun is half done, says the proverb—let us begin well by paying our divine benefactor His debt of thanksgiving. The Samaritan had a long road to travel before he could reach home and rejoice his family by appearing among them wholly cured of leprosy; and he began his journey well by first going back and giving thanks to his heavenly Physician. The Jews who were cured at the same time, hurried off to their homes, the holiest of debts—gratitude—left unpaid. Many a Christian may learn a lesson from this contrast, and stay in the church a little while after confession and communion, instead of running away guilty of forgetfulness of the divinest favors.

The supreme question in every confessor's mind after he absolves a penitent is this: Will this soul keep the promises he has made to God? Will he be faithful in saying his prayers? will he fly the danger of sin? will he return soon to the sacraments?—for all this he has pledged himself to do. If he does not, then he will relapse, and our Lord tells us what that may mean; for He said to one whom He had healed from both a bodily and spiritual malady: "Behold thou art made whole; sin no more lest some worse thing happen to thee" (John v. 14). Which had the better chance of perseverance in freedom from leprosy, my brethren, that grateful Samaritan or those ungrateful Jews?

What is the proper gift that should accompany thanksgiving? Myself. O Jesus, Thou has given *me* Thyself, wholly immolated on Calvary, and Thou dost press that gift importunately upon me in Holy Communion. Take me in return—poor me—in token of thanks. All my thoughts and affections, all my work and rest, all I am, is henceforward Thine. Make this offering a real one, final and eternal, by placing me in the keeping of Thy Holy Spirit, to be entirely guided by His inspirations to do good and to avoid evil.

You have seen signs over stores which were so made that they read one thing as you came down the street, and another thing as you went up the street; but both ways they advertised the same store. So may it be with your sorrow for your sins. It means one thing to begin with, namely, pain and grief of heart for having offended God, and this fills your soul as you prepare for confession. But whilst you make your confession and afterwards offer your thanksgiving, your sorrow gains another quality; it reads and sounds and is a thoroughgoing purpose of amendment. Contrition becomes, gradually and in the processes of your thank offerings, an eternal resolution to sin no more. In addition: not only your sorrow for sin but your every feeling of faith and hope and love towards God—every religious sentiment and conviction—must now be turned into an outpouring of gratitude as well as an unalterable resolution never to commit mortal sin. Take another comparison. The difference between contrition and purpose of amendment is like the difference between a pan of dough and a loaf of bread. The grace of the Sacrament of Penance is like the heat of an oven; it changes the raw material of sorrow for sin into the solid determination to sin no more forever. Now the ferment leavening the whole lump (Matt. xiii. 33) of our interior dispositions, is that sweet agitation of soul which inspires us to beg God to accept our prayer of deepest gratitude. We are fully persuaded that thanksgiving after confession and communion is a plain forecast of perseverance in grace.

But if we are ourselves a rightly chosen gift of thanksgiving to God after going to the sacraments, a yet better gift to offer is Jesus Christ Himself. To thank

God for all that He has done for us first and last—and O how much that has been!—is quite natural at a moment when He has crowned His generosity by granting us His Only-begotten Son. Now, in return, says St. Francis de Sales, "better offering I cannot make to the divine Majesty than to present to Him the One for Whom and by Whom everything is agreeable to Him" (*Letters to Persons in Religion,* Mackey, p. 321). In fact only after having offered Jesus to His Father shall we most fitly offer ourselves. It is the love of Jesus for us that makes us dear to the Father's heart, much dearer, in fact, than we can estimate. Jesus has made our heart His tabernacle, and this receptacle and casket must go with what it holds when we make our gift of Him to His heavenly Father. How expressive of this sentiment is the prayer *Supplices,* given us by Holy Church in the canon of the Mass after the consecration: "Suppliantly we beseech Thee, Almighty God, bid these things to be borne by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy divine Majesty: that as many of us as partake, in this Holy Communion, of the most sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son, may be filled with every heavenly grace and blessing. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen." Surely, my brethren, here is a message to God carried by the hands of our own guardian angel, worthy to be a thank offering for any and all favors we have received from on high.

As God, Jesus has all graces to bestow; and as our Eucharistic God, being one with the Father, He bestows His own divine Life: "As the living Father hath sent Me," He tells us, "and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi. 58). And now consider this: As Man, He is one with us, His humanity being the meeting place between the creature and the Creator. Now He gives us His Godhead in such wise in the Eucharist, that we are in our turn made the meeting place between divinity and humanity. And this sublime gift he bestows not once or twice in a lifetime, but, if we will, every day we live. O what a life of thanksgiving ours should be! How gladly should we make our own the resolve of the prophet: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be ever in my mouth" (Ps. xxxiii. 2). The Eucharist is the door of heaven through which Jesus comes to me from His Father, through which I return Him to His Father by my thanksgiving, by which He dismisses me again laden with a divinely generous store of graces. Being made the recipient of so many and so great favors, where and when should I feel devoutly thankful if not after communion? Well may we exclaim with St. Paul: "None of us liveth to himself; and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. xiv. 7, 8).

II. Thanksgiving.

"Were there not ten made clean? And where are the nine?"—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

These are reproachful words, my brethren. Our good Savior is indignant, because, of the ten men whom He healed of leprosy, nine forgot to return and thank Him. What a big majority—nine to one in favor of forgetting to acknowledge benefits. In any competition we naturally like to be with the majority. But in this comparison of the thankful with the thankless, we ought to be ashamed to be counted with that immense number of Christians who forget favors and ignore benefactors.

Meantime, giving thanks to God ought to be the easiest of religious duties. One may not be able to do heroic things for his divine Master, but who cannot say *Deo Gratias?* High, disinterested love is beyond our reach—so we think. But feelings of gratitude are natural, and this instinctive goodness, if cheap to us, is precious to Him Who is, nevertheless, the all-powerful Master of heaven, and of Whom it is said: "Every best gift and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James i. 17). If you say that you have little virtue and even of that you are not sure, yet so you cannot say of the virtue of thanksgiving, for this you can measure out to God plentifully with a hearty Our Father, when you think of His gift of life, or you call to mind His grant of the priceless boon of His religion. O loving Redeemer, Thou hast spared me during my years of sinfulness, when death would have meant damnation, Thou didst cure me of the leprosy of vice, Thou didst lavish upon me, all undeserving as I was, a multitude of Thy tender mercies! Is it not a pitiful and an ignoble thing that I do not so much as thank Thee?

Brethren, we find many Christians nowadays receiving the sacraments often enough to make saints of them. Yet they barely manage to skim along the very edge of the eternal precipice. Do you know why it happens that these souls, thus reveling in divine favors, are yet hardly safe from mortal sin for a single week? It is because they go to confession and communion with, indeed, some preparation beforehand, but afterwards slip away with hardly five minutes of thanksgiving. We read of St. Francis Borgia that whilst yet a young man living in the world, he was a weekly communicant. His preparation extended from midweek till Sunday, and his thanksgiving covered the three days that followed Sunday. He did not work any miracles in that early part of his career, but he gave God His due, and he made immense progress towards heroic sanctity.

We must also look carefully to our little debts of thanksgiving, such as our prayers at meals. St. Paul exhorts us: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). How many Christians sit down and rise up at table without any sign or word of gratitude to God, that heavenly Father Whose loving providence gives them every atom of their food, every pleasure and benefit of their appetite and their digestion. We believe that your debts to your butcher and grocer would be better paid if you paid God His debt of thanksgiving by saying your table prayers. Parents provide good food for their children and expect their gratitude, and wholly forget to teach them their prayers of gratitude to God before and after meals. They would have their family grateful to themselves, and they let them go along quite forgetful of God, the all-bountiful Provider for both parents and children.

Let us but realize that everything comes from God, and we shall soon give Him at least the meagre payment of our gratitude. It is a form of love that marks and then overflows the limit of mere justice. Whosoever is currently mindful of his dependence on heaven for every good thing of life, soon becomes a recollected spirit. The time surely comes when we must recognize our heavenly Father's love even in bitter adversity. Can we do that, can we kiss the hand that smites us even unto death, if we have been habitually thoughtless of His tenderest caresses?

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. God and Mammon.

"Jesus said to His disciples: No man can serve two masters......You cannot serve God and mammon."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

My brethren, whole-hearted service of God is inculcated by our Savior in these words. He enforces His teaching by showing us that as God cares bountifully for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, so will He surely care for us, whom He loves infinitely more. And yet half our heart is given to distresses about our future sustenance, and sometimes God's providence is not reckoned with at all.

Of course this rule of our Lord to calculate God's care of us as an asset in the ordinary business of life, blunts the edge of our ambition to acquire; not so much success in this life as bliss in the life to come is the motive of one who trusts Providence. Yet it does not make you a dullard or a laggard, but it changes the fever of money getting into the steady energy of duty done with a heavenly motive. To count God as our main provider does not hinder foresight in our own efforts at providing, for it only fits our efforts into His; and it watches for His yes or no as to our undertakings, savoring them with the salt of prayer. On the other hand, blindness to God's fatherly love changes diligence into panic. Thoughtful purpose is apt to degenerate into worry when God is absent from the mind. When the main thing even in our secular occupations is whole-hearted service of God, difficulties are much more courageously faced. A death blow is then given to those perpetual anxieties which embitter and often shorten the lives of worldlings. When it is realized that the "one thing necessary" (Luke x. 42) is the divine approval, whatever else is lost, peace of mind is not lost. If we, once for all, rate perishable things as falling short of our soul's best desires, we shall earn our bread industriously, and eat it peaceably in company with those who are dependent on us. Whole-hearted service of God emancipates us from heavy-hearted slavery to forebodings. One can bear the inevitable shocks of failure with fortitude, if he is not plagued with useless cares. You may say that no gospel is needed to teach such plain good sense as this. And surely you are right as far as your littler troubles are concerned. But those more serious ones which are certain to befall you, such as loss of health and disappointment with your associates, will sweep you quickly into fits of miserable despondency, unless a strong sense of God's fatherly care buoys you up. St. Paul points to the quick moving dial of time when he discusses our responsibilities, bidding us remember the eternal years: "This therefore I say, brethren: the time is short; it remaineth, that...... they that weep, be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you to be without solicitude" (1 Cor. vii. 29-32). The Venerable Cæsar Baronius carried out this injunction to the letter. Being disinherited in early life by his father because he quit a secular career and joined St. Philip Neri, he devoted himself entirely to spiritual things. When he came to die, he expressed himself as having been fortunate in his freedom from the ambitions and strivings of the world. He called his nephew to his bedside, and gave him his last will and testament as follows: "I leave you the same legacy which I received from my father—poverty." Most of us are not called upon to be so wholly stripped of perishable things as was Baronius, but all of us must admire and at least distantly imitate him in his tranquil contentment with the dispositions of Providence.

It is not written in our textbooks, but it is none the less sound economics—this saying of St. Francis de Sales: "You will have God always, whenever you please. And is not this to be rich enough?" (*Letters to Persons in the World, Mackey,* p. 216.) Riches heavenly and riches earthly, if our Lord is to be believed, are mostly destructive one of the other (Mark iv. 19). At best the search after them both is difficult and awkward, yet not a few saints have been rich men; saints they were in the calm contemplation of their savings in "bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not: where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth" (Luke xii. 33), with a perfect trust in Providence, and a fervent adoration of the poverty of Christ. There are rich men not a few, whose sweat in the pursuit of money is wiped away by their charity to the poor. Such a one is sometimes thrown by God straight in the way of financial opportunities, so that his great gains may be the joy of those to whom the same heavenly Father has allotted the sadness of penury. Furthermore, this moderate endeavor after prosperity is an essential cure of excess in dress, lodging, and all other ostentatious use of worldly goods, faults the sight of which enrages the poorer classes more than the accumulated wealth itself. No man is so verily a pauper as one who abounds both in money and the evil wishes of his neighbor. An utter starveling is richer than such a millionaire; as King Solomon says: "One is as it were rich when he hath nothing; and another is as it were poor when he hath great riches" (Prov. xiii. 7). It is no easy matter to mingle the thrifty prudence of the world with the maxims of Christ's gospel—so it seems. Yet we meet with many successful business men who are true Christians. They sweeten their toil with the consciousness of fulfilling God's will in the occupations of their state of life, yea, the sweetness is in doing God's will and not in their bank accounts. As if to say: My occupation is to labor thus and so, but my vocation is to worship my heavenly Father's will in all things perfectly. Meantime not a few of them find occasions to feel at least the dread of poverty, a pain which they cherish as a corrective of sensual joys, and as a reminder of their holy brotherhood with the vast multitude whose whole lives are a dreary struggle with want.

The application of this teaching of our Redeemer to present-day conditions is made plain if we consider that circumstances call the men and women of our time almost universally to a busy life in all the arts, and in trade and commerce. Father Hecker was persuaded that this meant God's call to unusual devotedness to religious practices amid the hurly burly of secular pursuits. In his sermon on St. Joseph *(The Saint of our Day)* he says: "St. Joseph found the means of perfection in the world, and consecrated it to God by making its cares and duties subservient to divine purposes. The house of St. Joseph was his cloister, and in the bosom of his family he practised the sublimest perfections. While occupied with the common daily duties of life, his mind was fixed on the contemplation of divine truths, thus breathing into all his actions a heavenly influence. He attained in society and in human relationship a degree of perfection not surpassed, if equalled, by the martyr's death, the contemplative of the solitude, the cloistered monk or the missionary hero......Our age lives in its busy marts, in counting-rooms, in workshops, in homes, and in the varied relations that form human society, and it is into these that sanctity is to be introduced."

Among the qualities making for even temporal success in life a love of prayer ranks first—for prayer alone will save such a success from being worse than failure. Consider that great success in a worldly sense is not the lot of the majority; and, further, consider that the lack of many temporal possessions should lead us to prepare ourselves for those heavenly possessions that are eternal. We, therefore, take the side of reason and experience when we obey St. Peter's counsel to humbly trust in Providence: "Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation: casting all your care upon Him, for He hath a care of you" (1 Peter v. 6, 7). That the practice of prayer should sweeten your industry, that monthly confession and communion should moderate your joy in your favorable cash balances—is not this the happier way? Or is it better to depend for good results upon endeavors exerted quite aloof from God? Does not this breed tumultuous energy? Does it not sometimes generate a truly satanic cunning in devising means of worldly success?

We cannot help asking you, my brethren, to consider St. Francis de Sales in this regard, for besides being one we love to quote—a favorite Saint of ours—he was born very rich, and gave up everything for the sake of Christ and His poor. When he was made bishop his rich friends, and they were very numerous, implored him to purchase a stately residence. His treatment of the offer is thus told by St. Jane Francis de Chantal in the evidence she gave in the process of his canonization: "It was an extraordinary satisfaction to him to have no house of his own, and to know that the master could turn him out whenever he pleased. 'A great many people' he said, 'try to persuade me to buy a house. O if they only knew the comfort it is to me not to have one, and that I never wish to have one, and that I hope to die glorying in having nothing, and that that is my one ambition. Yes, let the world clamor as it will; by the grace of God I shall never change in this.' And God in a measure fulfilled the desire of His servant, for he died in the house of a poor gardener."

How do you kill flies? You catch them with molasses; it smears their feet with sticky stuff; it sticks to their wings; wings and feet are both tangled up, and their fate is literally sealed. "Entangled"—the very word used by the Apostle in treating upon our present theme: "For the desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have *entangled* themselves in many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 10). And this entanglement he further calls "a snare of the devil." How do you catch fish? With a hook and bait. But some fish do not bite. And these are caught with a net, frequently with a gill net: their very heads are entangled in its meshes; and that is the end of them. So does the net of mammon entangle the head of the unreligious striver after worldly success. His dearest thoughts are invested in his business no less than is his money. His pockets are full, but his soul is empty of God and of eternity, empty of Christ and His promises and His maxims. He has no time nor strength for anything but business, none left for his prayers and the sacraments; all, absolutely all, that he is and has is dedicated to mammon.

II. Holy Poverty.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3).

Our blessedness, my brethren, consists in preferring the kingdom of heaven to the good things of this life. And when the celestial King, our Savior Jesus Christ, was founding the Church to which we belong, its first members found that they could best express their loyalty to Him by these words of St. Peter, the head of the Church: "Behold we have left all things, and have followed Thee" (Matt. xix. 27). Not all of us are called on so to change our way of living as literally to be poor, as were Christ and His disciples; but spiritually to be poor is the lot our Savior insists upon for all of His followers, and constantly inspires them to cultivate:—spiritually to draw the line between transitory things and eternal things, and for His sake mentally to choose the latter and to reject the former. St. Vincent Ferrer expresses this beautifully: "Consider yourself a stranger on earth, so that whatever you possess seems to you to belong to others rather than to yourself; feeling no more attachment to your own possessions than if they were rightfully owned by someone living far away from you."

Now this idea (and, brethren, the more you think of it the more it will draw you towards it), is by no means merely a theoretical or fantastical poverty. For although one who has assimilated it owns and manages his property, yet his feeling of its earthliness is essentially restrictive of excess in its use, whether in his dress, lodging, table, or amusements. He feels, besides, that persons who are literally poor are his creditors, and stand before him with the right to a share of what he has. He helps them readily, and not so much by condescension as by compensation. Of course we are speaking of one whose motives are generated by study of Christ's own motives, one actuated by "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). Experience of all Christian ages proves the attractiveness of this condition of mind. The best men and women of the richer class actually impoverish themselves by giving to the poor. Each of these noble-hearted beings feels like this: I have made up my mind to have nothing of my own in this life, even though I have the disposal of money and means; my motive is pity for Christ's brethren, the poor; another, and a more hidden and more sacred motive, is that freedom from earthly ties and attachments makes me more eager to form heavenly ones; but the deepest motive of all is a longing within me to imitate Christ and be joined with Him in detachment from all earthly goods. Does this spirit seem overstrained piety for the state of life of a man living in the world? Not so. Many such men and women are among you, my brethren, a few very rich and copiously charitable for Christ's sake. Multitudes of others who are not well off and have little to spare from strict necessity, yet readily and even eagerly give that little away from the highest motives of the Gospel.

When we go among the saints we find the extreme, because the ideal, manifestation of poverty, as our Lord understands the term. St. Francis de Sales—so his associate Saint, Jane Frances de Chantal, swore in her evidence about his degree of holiness—"never handled money except to distribute it to the poor; and he so despised it that he did not wish to know anything about its value or the different kinds of coin in circulation." An unearthly—truly a heavenly—way of feeling and acting. And you know that St. Francis de Sales was the eldest son of a rich nobleman. So was St. Francis of Assisi the eldest son of a rich merchant, and he had a positive aversion for money, avoided the very touch or even sight of it—just as a dainty lady would avoid filth. Think you, my brethren, that these glorious men, who ruled millions of souls to secure their eternal welfare in the kingdom of heaven, were under a delusion in all this? Think you that sincere admiration for them shall be unwise on our part, with whatever degree of imitation Providence affords us in our state of life?

Another thought, and it is one of much value, is the good of this detachment of soul on the part of those who are literally poor, and who must be content with their lot or fall into despair. For penury is stripped of its misery when its sorrows are borne in union with Him, Who, being the Son of the living God, for our sakes was born in a stable, brought up in the cottage of a village workman, lived on alms whilst preaching His heavenly gospel, and died on the cross naked and abandoned by all. The most devout as well as happy men and women in the world are the Christian poor—trust the word of a priest who knows them well. And their souls are the calmest and sweetest at the moment of death.

Once we attended a poor woman in her last hours in a hospital, and she said to us: "Father, I am now advanced in years, and I have always been poor and always tried to be a faithful Catholic. I never owned anything worth having in my whole life; I always had to work hard. And at last I am dying in a charity hospital. You have asked me if I am resigned to die? Resigned? I give up this worn-out body to Jesus Christ as the only gift I can offer Him, just as I have in my time given my worn-out dress to someone poorer than I. For my crucified Savior certainly died much poorer than I do."

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Steadfastness in God's Service.

"And in doing good, let us not weary; for in due time we shall reap, if we faint not."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

The Apostle's words, my brethren, are an incentive to improve our opportunities for doing good in view of the certainty of being rewarded " in due time." The certainty of that reward will come only after a good death. We longingly forecast our death when we are in trouble—that is to say if we be religiously minded. Each according to his lights chooses his favorite dispositions of soul, and the circumstances, and the persons present. All would wish the aid of Mary our advocate, and the saints and angels who have loved us best. Newman says that the assemblage of Holy Church's aids is to be prayed for, priest and sacraments and loving friends. It was all granted to that modern apostle of the English. But when it is a question of the interior dispositions of a departing soul, various are the preferences of devout Christians. How appropriate, says one, that sorrow for sin should possess my thoughts in my last earthly hour, since true contrition opens the gate of heaven. Union with God in the prayer of contemplation will be the choice of another. But conformity with the divine will would seem to be the best of all dispositions for the last passage; it ought to be the end as it is the very beginning of true service, as the prophet teaches: "In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will. O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law is in the midst of my heart" (Ps. xxxix. 8, 9). Does not this include everything? Worship of God's will makes contrition for sin perfect; it fits us for the sacraments; it is our nearest approach to God; it is the contemplative's boon, for it is the prayer of eternal quiet; and above all it is what our Savior chose as the adornment of His soul when it entered into its rest on Calvary. The last words of Jesus on the cross, how holy a claim on our choice they possess. How sacred must be the disposition they express, since it was the preference of the dying Redeemer: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46). Let us die as nearly as possible after the manner in which He died, that as our life "in due time" vanishes, it may "be hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). What better reward could we desire for the good works we have done, than total and final absorption of them in resignation to the divine will.

The recognition, and as it were the adoration, of the sublime separateness of the grace of perseverance is needful for our faith, for this is a certain truth of religion. No grace now in my possession can be known by me as the grace of my perseverance; and to this there can be no exception. But if there could be any certain foretaste of that grace, it would be the grace to say now that very thing with all sincerity. For is not this another way of expressing our absolute submission to the will of God living and dying? It indicates so deep a self-distrust as to throw me wholly upon the divine bounty for even so much as a single day's freedom from mortal sin. It is the prophet's perfect act of filial confidence in God: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be put to confusion; deliver me in Thy justice, and rescue me" (Ps. lxx. 1).

Meanwhile St. Paul's injunction not to "weary," least of all to "faint," in the good works of our religion, inculcates a quick resolve to look far ahead for reward—"in due time." God's is the choice of the time, and His only certain time of full reward is the point of death. St. Yvo, a holy man of wealth in the Middle Ages, was accustomed to give the price of his wheat harvest to the poor, selling it as soon as it was threshed. "Wait," said a friend to him on one occasion, "for a few months, and you will then get a better price for it." The Saint answered: "I know not whether I shall then be alive to give it away." The prospect of death, be it only in imagination, gives to a true Christian's good works the impetus of emergency. Thereby do the wisest among us make final perseverance not so much a matter of years as of days. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge" (Ps. xviii. 2). One day forecasts another. Its graces have been linked to the day before, and they look forward to be linked to the day after. One grace, for example, works conversion, and it is followed by many other graces moving to deeper love. But a final grace is needed for perseverance, a grace separate from the preceding ones and different from them all, but yet in a way called for by them; because it is the King of all graces, and, therefore, they are its heralds and its subjects.

If one's fears are about what may happen in the future hours of this very day, they are surely wise. It may be quite the reverse if they concern future years. In seeking to forefend remote dangers, one may easily forget those that are near at hand. Vigilance to be useful must be practical: "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. vi. 34). Or rather we might say that appreciation of present privileges, and dread of present dangers, actually is the best preparation for the future. Meantime we always feel that a grace at present is a promise as well as a grace. One can hardly imagine our good Father bestowing a grace which shall stand alone and helpless: God is constant in His love. And we, tasting the sweetness of grace—of holy faith in God and of divine love—do we not instinctively pray for more such sweetness? Shall not faith be superior to time, and love be immune from the mutations of seasons? God, indeed, does not forbid our yearning for future good, and He often obligates us to prepare against future risks. But in every such case it is to be done in faith and hope, as by one who relies on the sound of a distant voice on an unknown and darkened road.

Our Lord once said: "He that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound" (Matt. xiii. 12). This plainly shows that one virtue is promise of another. Besides being good in itself, each actual virtue is indicative of more virtue that is possible. It generates a craving for more. A good deed breeds a resolution for another good deed. St. Peter was miraculously loosed from his chains in prison and liberated; but only when he had passed the guards, had got outside the gates, and had got further along into a street, was he content, saying: "Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent His angel and hath delivered me" (Acts xii. 7-11). Everything led up to that. Everything before total deliverance seemed, as the holy narrative tells us, like "a dream" to him. So shall all of God's graces seem to us, when we look back upon them from the thither side of a happy death; and yet they one and all led up to it. Therefore we repeat that one of the qualities attached to grace is a longing for more grace. Thus our Lord taught of the waters of life: "The water that I will give him, shall become a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting" (John iv. 14). See how true this is: Whatsoever gift of God I receive inspires gratitude to the giver, which is a grace additional to the first one. Gratitude in turn wins another favor, for the thanks of the child increase the love of the Father, and stimulate His further generosity. This whole life of ours to the very end is thus made (if we will) a continuous exchange of love for love. It is this (and is it not an easy solution of one of our gravest difficulties?) that has caused St. Francis de Sales to call perseverance a sequence of graces. It is that greater gift by which we are strengthened to hold fast the graces already given us. Each of these, taken in its own excellence, is good for a happy death did the call come right now, and I but lack a further power of loving even unto the end to make it the seal of eternal beatitude. O Lord Jesus Christ! Thy interest, joy, triumph, and whole endeavor with me; and my interest, joy, triumph, and whole endeavor with myself, are identical, namely, to secure my perseverance in grace till the end. I thank Thee sincerely for this union of our motives, and of our striving for what happily ends both Thy task and my own. But, O Lord, I am weak-hearted and feeble-minded in effecting my part, and therefore do I cry to Thee in the words of Thy prophet: " Perfect Thou my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved" (Ps. xvi. 5).

Not known with certitude, perseverance—in the light of what we have been saying—is for that very reason the better secured by presently deepening our love of it, and by sharpening our fear of missing it. When the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonas, they exclaimed: "Who can tell if God will turn, and forgive; and will turn away from His fierce anger, and we shall not perish?" (Jonas iii. 9.) The element of uncertainty of their final reconciliation increased the sincerity of their amendment, and attributed salvation rightly and wholly to God's unpurchased goodness. Hence the exhortation of St. Teresa: "Struggle manfully, for you only come here for battle" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, ch. xx., 1). Each one of us by this spirit becomes a soldier of Gedeon's choice, to whom Jehovah commanded: "Whosoever is fearful and timorous, let him go back" (Judges vii. 3). Thus is victory won rather by the spirit's manliness of purpose before the fight than by the strong right arm in the conflict itself; or, better said, valor is rather in the heart than in the arm of the warrior who finally triumphs.

A practical view of the future is one which ponders the temptations known to be inevitable, and against them establishes a regimen of prayer, vigilance, and some penitential exercises—these all joined to the use of the sacraments. Vigilance, we insist. For this detects the danger in the first slightest impulse to wrong doing. The soul safe for final perseverance is one that is fastidious in cleansing itself of little suggestions of evil, and miserly in accumulating little inspirations of grace.

II. Admonishing Sinners.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

Progress in the grace of God, says Fénelon, is marked by the increase of benevolence. Sometimes we forget that a disposition to lend a hand to our neighbor in his distress is fulfilling a law, nay, a double law, that of obeying Christ's will to make our fellowman happy, and that of taking a step forward on the road of our own spiritual progress.

Now, the hardest burden of all is mortal sin. Have you helped your neighbor to get rid of that? We should sometimes admonish sinners; but let us be careful not to do so disdainfully. A mocking reproof is a poisoned medicine. Gentle remonstrance is a healing balm. It is patient admonition, my brethren, that alone is successful; love is the most nourishing of all spiritual food. An admonition in presence of a third party is not justice but lynch law, not charity but censoriousness. Remember that one who is guilty of sin is usually touchy and resentful of interference. Be kind to him; that is your first rule. Patiently wait for a calm moment; that is your other rule.

Real kindness is not shown by a sudden spurt of zeal. It is rather evidenced by unvarying patience under many rebuffs, and constant readiness to seize a favorable opportunity.

He who knows how to suffer delay in securing the repentance of a sinner whom he loves, has learned the secret of victory. But we must not delay too long;

be not afraid, but cautious. "The charity of Christ presseth us" (2 Cor. v. 14), says the Apostle, and God's providence soon gives us our opportunity.

No one is so like God as a strong soul whose whole force is for saving sinners. Try to be such a one. Are you a good talker? Make up to a wayward friend and entertain him, keeping a sharp lookout for the chance of a kindly insinuation about the claims of eternity. Are you a good listener? Then you have an ambush for projecting a sharp but affectionate question about certain virtues and vices. Meantime and always pray for a sinful friend; now and then offer a communion for him; make the Stations of the Cross for him.

Never despise a sinner, my brethren. Keep your mind gentle and humble. Even the worst sinners are usually more to be pitied than blamed. Anyway, each of us has himself made a record as a sinner, each is liable to fall again. We should blush to plume ourselves over even the worst of malefactors. The true spirit of warning a wicked man is described by St. Paul in this very epistle: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). St. Francis de Sales says: "I would trade a hundred serpents for one dove." That is to say, a hundred stinging rebukes are of worse than no value to a sinner, compared with one gentle reminder of God and of Jesus Crucified. God alone can use the lash upon a sinner to start him up the hill of repentance.

It is a trait of Christian brotherhood to converse readily with anybody, but especially with a stranger, even an enemy, above all with one known to be a sinner. In this we imitate our Redeemer, Who did not disdain to speak with notoriously bad women, thereby converting them; Who sat familiarly at table with publicans, and also with arrogant Pharisees; in all this leaving us a striking example. Not only so, but by His success in converting and saving souls in this way, He teaches us both the spirit and the method of dealing with sinners to their eternal advantage.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Rash Judgment.

"When Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees on the Sabbath day to eat bread, they watched Him."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

"They *watched Him,*" those Pharisees, full of suspicions and rash judgments; and He watched them, full of love for them, and pity, reading their inmost souls like an open book; for Jesus "knew what was in man" (John ii. 25). And He watches and reads our thoughts, my brethren, His Holy Spirit now and again whispering: "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" (Matt. ix. 4) —not about Him, God forbid! but about His children, our brothers and sisters and neighbors. Sometimes we avenge our injuries by inflicting others, at least with the whip of the tongue; but when hindered from that sweet taste of blood, we go into our heart's secret chamber and prick at our wounds till they bleed again, meantime mentally railing at our enemy with fearful condemnations. Little do we dream of St. Teresa's salve for a wounded spirit: "O how soon do all hurts that are borne with love heal again!" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, ch. xvi., 5.) This is among the most excellent lessons of the Gospel of Christ: namely, that restraint of judgment on our neighbor relaxes the stricture that agonizes our heart against him. Blessed is the soul that learns the righteousness of leaving the judgment seat vacant for God. To be positively charitable in one's thoughts is a high grace, but it is rare. The grace to quit judging uncharitably is a universal grace.

Rash judgment is both an act of spleen and of injustice. How many persons to us disagreeable are to God very agreeable, says a saintly writer. Our Savior teaches: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment" (John vii. 24). Therefore does that Supreme Judge set up a barrier between the looks of things and the real facts: according to Him appearances are not valid premises for conclusions. We sometimes *must* trust a friend in spite of appearances. Friendship has a sound eye for virtue and a blind eye for vice. Must we not sometimes trust even God against appearances? God permits evil, and that looks bad to many sincere minds, who yet trust God as infinitely good in spite of appearances; and they do so most firmly and most tranquilly. Job was conscious of nought but guileless behavior in God's sight, and yet was he treated like the vilest malefactor; while wholly unknowing of the blessedness of the adversity he was asked to endure, he yet blindly cried out: "Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him" (Job xiii. 15). So must we trust men who are our friends that way, and for the same reason: love outranks justice. As to our enemies, we must adjourn the court as soon as it is opened in our thoughts and keep it adjourned. And if forced to decide a case, we must arraign ourselves beforehand, rehearse our own misdemeanors (perhaps felonies); and by the time that is done and over, we shall have no heart to arraign others. A certain man in Granada persecuted St. John of God, accusing him of gross sinfulness. He tracked the Saint once when he went to console and help a destitute widow and her four little ones; he peeped into the room, his mind reeking with suspicions of lewdness. But presently his eye was caught by certain words brightly written on the wall of the room: first his own name, then his principal sins, all foul and deadly. He uttered a groan and fell down in a faint. The Saint took him home and converted him to a good life. So, if we would look inward we should see things written by God's hand on our consciences that would scare us off from judging our neighbor.

Herein is the defect of some persons' piety, for, says Fénelon, "their humility and charity amount only to a sort of compassionate toleration nearly resembling contempt." It is undoubtedly the will of God that we should never interiorly decide that our neighbor has done wrong, unless we do so under compulsion of duty, being, for example, obligated to administer an admonition. If I devoted as much thought to God and His Son and His

Holy Spirit as I do to men, I should soon be a saint; and if I thought as often of men's good deeds as I do of their evil ones, I should not be so much of a sinner as I am. To think lovingly of God with a soul freed from thinking censoriously of men, would be a miraculous uplift of grace, and a passing from belief in the divine all-loveliness to a realization of it. St. Francis of Paula, in founding his order of Minims, establishes self-denial in body and in soul by a rule more strict, perhaps, than that of any order of modern times. Yet when he would choose a motto and a symbol for his community, he took not austerity and humility, but brotherly love as being nearer the very fountain head of Christian perfection. Peace and mutual affection! How delightful is a life ruled by such gentle virtues.

Rash judgment is a pious vice, or we should better say a vice of the pious. The raiment of Christ's discipleship is too often made the ermine of a self-installed judge, and in these courts (so unlike the divine) justice is preferred to mercy. Not seldom do we hear criticisms harsh and rash, even the attributing of unworthy motives, from lips but shortly before sweetened by the blood of the all-loving Savior in Holy Communion. It is a pitiful thing, that whilst I am devoutly reading of the sorrows of Christ and His Mother, I am meanwhile pondering how I may add to the sorrows of my neighbor—all in the interests of holy zeal! The immense importance of being holy swells the soul to bursting, not with the essence of holiness which is love, but with the humors of spiritual self-elation. We all think more thoughts than we utter words, but only the saints think more charity than they speak and act. We, their puny imitators, deem it a special merit if we but throw a thin veil of pious dissembling over our censorious remarks.

It is a trait of self-importance to be reluctant to praise others. Careful diagnosis of rash judgment reveals pride as the germ of the disease, especially of attributing motives. It is pride's effrontery, pure and simple, to walk into God's court room and sit down in the seat of justice, open the court, and dispatch all prisoners to their penalties from pillory to gallows. No wonder God first lessens and then withdraws graces from such a one, since He has proclaimed "Judge not!" (Luke vi. 37). Curiously enough it is sometimes against virtue that pious people harbor evil thoughts; envy in pious persons is that morbid gluttony which feeds as much on the virtue of others as on their vices. An envious pious man excels all other monopolists in hatred of competition; whilst a really pious man is for unlimited free trade in good deeds. Kind interpretations are to him a duty, and he becomes a casuist in handling excuses for the wrong doing of his neighbor. Once an incorrigibly bad servant was reported to St. Francis de Sales with an urgent request for his dismissal; but the Saint said that God had so softened his heart as to unfit him for dismissing anybody from his employment.

Diseased blood hurts every organ of the body, and totally corrupts some of them; in like manner tendencies to misjudge ramify throughout our whole spiritual organism. The saint teaches that defect in any one virtue is shared by all the others; or rather that it blocks progress in any other. But when the limping virtue is the supreme one of charity, then the others must lie in stagnant helplessness till the root and foundation excellence (Eph. iii. 17) of our souls is restored to health. Blessed is the soul whose thoughts about his neighbor are not warped by self-interest—a soul in which the stock of justice is exhausted when self has been tried, convicted, sentenced, and executed. Cultivate the company of such a one; you will perceive his fine penetration of judgment in his views of the good traits of mutual friends. His kindly instincts are nearer to facts than your sharper but envenomed investigation; for charity is a truer guide than justice. An unsympathetic mind cuts up a living patient as a medical student dissects a dead body: rather to learn things than to save lives.

Men universally prefer a dull but friendly mind to a bright and unfriendly one. For even if the friendly one is dull it does not need watching. You are offended if any one is preferred before you, especially if he is stupid. But as between you and anybody else, the main difference in people's eyes will be the answer to this question: Which of the two is the kinder? Any old rag of a man or woman who is kind, kindly disposed, and kind spoken, is set in advance of a born genius who is not kind. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us," exclaims the beloved disciple, "that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). The counterpart of this honor, that of being the object of divine paternal charity, is the twin honor of being called to be one another's brethren. If men see us their true brothers so plainly as to wish to call us so, then our lives are rightly those of God's sons. But what if they could read our hearts to that effect? It has been said that the uncontrollable utterance of secret thoughts is insanity. What about the uncontrollable cherishing of secret ill will?

One might profitably spend the time of his morning prayers for weeks together in establishing in his day's work and play the meaning of those great words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark xii. 31). Now love is essentially a virtue of the thoughts, and herein Christ claims them for our neighbor. A stern friend it is who claims my very thoughts' love, my thoughts' blood, as it were, for his own disposal: such a friend is Christ. And He is also a greedy friend; for He will not let me say: At least my thoughts are my own.

Our Savior's law makes neighborhood equal to friendship. He does not say: Love thy friend as thyself, for that I easily do if I am of a hearty nature. But according to Christ the accident of neighborhood, the happening to meet a man on a journey, gives him ownership of my kind thoughts. Of course it means nothing less than this: Love every man as thy friend, which often means more than to love him as thyself. And this is a law second only to the law of loving our Creator. Its practical fulfillment is modeled for us on Calvary and in Holy Communion. We say the saddest thing about a man when we say: He is without a friend in the world. Jesus would require me to rise up and say of the vilest of men: I deny that he is without a friend, for I am his friend. In token of possessing this universal love, Jesus exclaimed: "Greater love than this no man hath, than that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). In imitation of this, it is little enough if we at least reserve good thoughts for them.

Everyone has a divine right to our charitable and lenient judgment. Consider the equipment of mind needful for deciding against our neighbor, including a generally impossible fullness of information, we have a formidable list of credentials necessary for sitting on the bench and arraigning prisoners. And even when one is quite charitable and entirely well-informed, he may lack the judicial temperament. It is of a universal evil that the prophet speaks when he says: "Men are liars in their balances" (Ps. lxi. 10). The true man always suspects his tendency to use false weights when weighing out penalties for his neighbors' shortcomings. He therefore cultivates a frame of mind in accordance with the advice of our gentle St. Francis de Sales: "As charity is afraid to meet evil so she never seeks after it; but whenever it falls in her way she turns her face aside, and does not notice it. At the first alarm of evil she closes her eyes, and afterwards believes with an honest simplicity that it was not evil but only a semblance of it; and if she cannot avoid sometimes acknowledging it to be real evil, she quickly turns from it, and endeavors to forget even its shadow. Charity is the sovereign remedy for all evils, but for rash judgment especially" (*Devout Life,* Part III., ch. xxviii.).

As for the full cure of rash judging, remember that the readjustment of a faulty mind is a matter of time. A displaced joint may be set in two seconds, but it will ache for two years except you keep quiet for a time. A dislocated temper must be now and then jerked back, but then it must have soothing intervals also; and these are to be occupied in thoughts of God's Son and His love for men, both the good and evil. To become habituated to kind thoughts is for many a Christian a mighty conquest; it is to triumph all along the line.

What a wise plan of cleaning up our life is that which begins with disinfecting our thoughts of uncharity. God asks of us an unvarying patience, inwardly cherished, outwardly maintained under oft-repeated trials. He asks of us a constant readiness to postpone judgment with inwardly spoken excuses and palliations, condonings, and postponings, whilst untimely and intrusive justice is clamoring at the door. A sleepless vigilance against injurious thoughts is the trimming of the Bridegroom's lamp. Uniformly high principled kindness of heart—O it is to be securely had only after years of struggle with an enemy so wholly domesticated as is the tendency to sit in judgment. "Charity," says the Apostle, "thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). This is love's best achievement: a habit of mind that is considerate of our neighbor's feelings for Christ's sweet sake. How soon does one learn the value, not so much to others as to himself, of this kindly way of thinking; for it corrects the inner ferment of a sour nature, and it stops the foul eructations of harsh words. Peace is wisely bought even when dearly bought; but the precious gem of interior peace is to be had for little daily payments of the most plentiful of all commodities, the charity of Christ, which enables thee to "do judgment, and to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with thy God" (Mich. vi. 8).

II. A Happy Death.

"Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace" (Luke ii. 29).

Our sermon last Sunday, my brethren, was on the lessons of death, with particular application to those whose lives are wicked. To-day we shall speak of the death of the just man, whom God calls away in peace and consolation to bestow upon him the rewards of eternal life. Such a meditation is useful to all, but especially to those who are advanced in years, or whose health is precarious. Consider St. Bernard's case. He was a saint of marvelous power, and his influence upon his age was paramount, not only in religious but in secular affairs. Study his great and little acts one by one, and you find them the very hinges of public life in his day. Now nothing is more peculiar than the frame of mind he was in during his entire career. He felt himself to be always on the point of death. Everything he did, said or wrote was the act of a dying man—so extreme was the weakness of his wasted body. My brethren, I believe that the best effect of all our spiritual exercises would be reached if we could but anticipate and realize the influence of impending death.

A good death is, of course, best assured to those who lead a good life. There are men and women in this parish who could use the words of the ancient hermit, St. Hilarion, when trembling at the approach of his last hours, he reproached himself, saying: "Courage, my soul; willingly depart from this body; why dost thou fear? It is now sixty years since thou didst begin to serve God fervently. Why, then, shouldst thou be afraid to meet Him?" Yet not a few good Christians are unable to overcome the fear of death as advancing years, or the encroachment of a fatal disease, warns them that "the Judge standeth before the door" (James v. 9). Their humility is such that they look upon themselves as convicted criminals, tremblingly waiting for the coming of the executioner. But this very sentiment is a mark of a happy death, for it is not the fear of one who is in despair; no, it is rather a reverential awe. Do you fear death on account of your wickedness? Then welcome it on account of God's mercy, for by dying in submission to God's will, you offer Him in satisfaction for your sins the dearest gift possible—your life. You can say to Him: "O Jesus, here is my life for Thy life; and although I am dying by compulsion, yet none the less do I die willingly. I offer Thee my death in atonement for my sins, wholly in union with Thy death, which was for the same intention. There was not one single moment of my life, O Jesus Crucified, which was not full of Thy mercy and grace. Thy love will surpass itself at this supreme moment, when I can give Thee the one only gift that by any stretch of imagination can be thought a fitting return for Thy goodness to me—my death."

Of course, my brethren, not all of us can command such sentiments, the fullness of them at any rate. But yet our faith teaches us that He Who has loved us and Whom we have loved, will keep His plighted word with us unto our last hour (2 Tim. i 12). Venerable Sister Crescentia used often to say: "The sweetest words in the world are Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and death" (*Life,* p. 301). And when St. John Berchmans was told that he could not recover from his sickness, and should now prepare for the last sacraments, he exclaimed: "O happy news! O delightful news! It is the sweetest news I ever heard." And yet he was but twenty-two years old, snatched away at the very beginning of a career which had promised to be one of great honor and splendid success. Well may we pray with the prophet of ancient days: "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them" (Num. xxiii. 10).

We should never forget that our Savior has something more than a desire or even a purpose to give us a happy end. He has assumed the task of doing so; He feels a sense of responsibility for our salvation. Out of a feeling of justice to His Father He died for us; yet mingled with this was a feeling of pity for us. The divine attributes of justice and mercy—of both of which He is complete Master—impose upon Him the burden of our dying in the divine love. He has assumed that task; the Father looks to Him to perfect it. Shall we not remember this always, especially during our moments of despondency? Heaven seems an immense favor to ask. But to ask less is to discredit the mercy of the Son of God, of Whom each of us can say, *must* say: "That I live now in the flesh. I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20). Living and dying we are equally His Who purchased us (2 Peter ii. 1) with His blood, and He will simply claim His own when He stands at our deathbed to receive our soul in our last earthly moment.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Faith as a Grace.

"And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying: What think you of Christ? Whose Son is He?"—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

THEY answered Jesus never a word, these Pharisees, because, my brethren, some of them were puzzled by His teaching, and some were squarely against it: the former knew not what to think of Him, and the latter were more ready to stone Him than to reason with Him. None of them had faith in Him. You will remember a question like this, one that Jesus asked His disciples: "Whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Now this answer Peter made for himself and for the other disciples, because he and they had faith in Him, which is a belief inspired from on high. For our Savior immediately replied: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven." You know, too, that this faith of Peter, thus instantly and emphatically professed, was set up by Christ as the high-chair of universal teaching; that Apostle was made the foundation stone and the key bearer of the Church of Christ. God's spokeman then, Peter has been God's spokesman ever since in the person of his successors. He is so now, and shall continue so to be till the gates of hell are closed forever at the day of judgment (Matt. xvi. 13-19).

The faith of Catholics is therefore very different from thinking something to be true, "or to imagine or be of opinion;" faith, says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, "is, as the Scriptures teach, the deepest conviction of the mind, by which we give a firm and unhesitating assent to God revealing His mysterious truths" *(I. Article of Apostles' Creed).* The firmness of this assent is not wholly natural nor principally so. It arises from an interference with natural convictions on the part of God, throwing upon them a divine light to know the glory and beauty of His revelations, and to give them an attractiveness proper to their worth. This divine influence is thus described by the Apostle: "For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone in our hearts" (2 Cor. iv. 6). The difference between knowing Christ and His Church and Sacraments on the part of an unchristian inquirer and a baptized Catholic, is that between knowing things which are half-hidden, which come and then go, and which are forever points of controversy, and knowing them clear and plain, all questions being closed. The Catholic mind may make excursions right and left for fuller information, or to refute contradiction and answer inquiries, or to satisfy devotional sentiment. But with Christ His teacher ever before him, with the "Father of lights" (James i. 17) ever beaming upon him, it would be as arrogant as it would be foolish for a Catholic to harbor doubts: his mind reposes in immutable tranquillity of belief.

This virtue of faith, so elevating to our mental faculties, should, therefore, guide us in discriminating between conviction and opinion. Conviction in religious matters, when it is whole and entire, belongs to articles of faith and other teachings of the Church closely associated with them. But when we take sides in disputes about other religious matters upon which Rome has not spoken, we do so as persons exchanging views, clearing up doubts, all propositions being toned down to the level of opinion. In such cases we are like law students practising in a moot court. We should reserve convictions till the solid rock of the Church is felt underlying them. Another illustration may be taken from our prayers. When we pray for necessary graces we make no conditions with God, as, for example, when we pray for perseverance till death, or true contrition for our sins. We dare not then harbor any such limitations as: "If it be pleasing to Thee"—our usual reservation when we ask for such favors as recovery from illness, or the gift of tears. So when matters of religious belief are asking our allegiance, our mind unreservedly bows down and accepts the teaching of the Church as soon as we learn it. We yield conviction. Anything short of that can only win a conditional assent: we yield our opinion; ready to give it up if it conflict with Holy Church. The difference between conviction and opinion is as great as that between faith and no faith.

It was a maxim of St. Ignatius: "We must think and feel with the Church." Nor did he mean the Church in the abstract, such as it is viewed by high Anglicans, a memory of past ages; but just the Church alive and voiceful and forceful this very day and everywhere about us, centred at Rome in Peter's successor, palpitating with truth, and active in enforcing belief by a divine teaching authority. It calls for a union of sentiment as well as a union of belief, sentiment, and instinct; loyalty of heart joined to conviction of mind. It was a saying of Father Hecker, always uttered with emotion: "I have ever heard the voice of Rome as the voice of God."

Sentiments and feelings are apt to mislead us unless they are pointed towards Catholic teaching in all simplicity, then they are of sacred utility. A saintly bishop wrote to a friend whose faith was under trial, and his words are a warning against mere sentimentalism in belief: "Our imagination, our senses, our feelings, our taste, our consolations, our arguments, may be deceived and may err; and to live according to them is to live in untruth, or at least in a perpetual risk of untruth; but to live in naked and simple faith—this is to live in truth."

A Protestant lady used to visit Bishop Ullathorne to discuss religion; but it was all done in a spirit of intellectual inquiry. The Bishop at last said to her: "I wish you would go and talk with Sister Margaret Mary Hallahan," at that time his school teacher; "there you will see the Catholic faith in action." Returning from the interview the lady said: "Sister Margaret is a wonderful woman; she sees invisible things more clearly than I see visible ones." A good definition of "Catholic faith in action."

This supreme element of our religion, which only waits for the addition of love's obedience to claim entrance to Paradise, is a workaday virtue. "We walk by faith" (2 Cor. v. 7) claims St. Paul; and again: "It is manifest that the just man liveth by faith" (Gal. iii. 11). And consider his good wishes to the Christians of Rome: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xv. 13). A hopeful and buoyant spirit is the fruit of believing according to the grace of faith. And this is especially good for overcoming temptations against the truths of religion, for he that fights in gloom fights to be conquered. Many a one never has any temptations against religion; but others, again, are seldom without them, being mentally built with a leaning towards doubt. But like the leaning tower of Pisa, they may yet preserve their equilibrium, on condition that they tranquilly and happily look upwards to heavenly truth and downwards to the solid grace of faith. In battling with temptations against the faith, the saints bid us act as we do against temptations against purity—never parleying with the enemy. Let him clamor his doubts and questions outside the ramparts, whose gates are closed when questions of faith are sacredly held as closed questions—just as much so as are questions of chastity closed questions. Curiosity to further know, or mawkish bravery to cross swords of argument with the adversary, are really opening the door to the evil spirit. If mere acts of faith are your defence they are defence enough, and the enemy will soon get tired and leave you in peace. A devout friend wrote to us during the Modernistic controversy: "When these difficulties enter my mind, I treat them as I do unclean temptations," and these were the words of a well-read, intellectual Christian.

Cardinal Newman warns us against "a secret shrinking from the Church's teaching." We are liable to this because we live in a very wilderness of downright error, only varied by utterly careless statements of fundamental truths even when they are apparently believed.

Our faith nowadays is like the valley of the river Nile, each bank of which is fertilized for a little space by its waters, the arid desert stretching beyond as far as eye can see. So does my faith flow through my life as a stream of truth through a wilderness of delusions. It fertilizes my soul with fruitful convictions, motives, promises, joys, all flowing down from the mountains of God, making of my life an Eden of spiritual flowers and fruits, a paradise on earth. This I must guard most vigilantly against the intrusion of the tempter, the demon of unbelief; this I must diligently preserve against the encroachments of the barrenness of doubt, whose sands are constantly being wafted towards my garden by the winds of false teaching. He who seeks the truth of God outside the Church, plants his garden upon the misery of human opinion, and he will gather only the dead sea fruit of intellectual confusion and despair.

That Catholicity suits our taste is easily understood, for it is most beautiful: and therefore it is believed. That it is redolent of our love for our parents is plain, for it formed their lovely character: and therefore it is believed. That it touches with a peculiar sweetness our views of life and of mankind is evident, for it is the religion of the cave of Bethlehem, and of the heroic event of Calvary: and therefore it is believed. But these elevated standards of taste, these gentle family affections, these touching pictures of the imagination—these are not motives of faith, whose truths are held by the understanding and cherished by the heart because they are taught by God, for "God is true and every man a liar" (Rom. iii. 4)—the reason, assigned for Catholic belief by the Church herself in the Catechism of the Council of Trent. God has revealed them; God has founded His Church to declare them; God has inspired our soul with a love of them; God has sensitized our conscience with a dread of losing them.

O Lord Jesus Christ! Thou dost continually put that same question to us: "What think you of Christ? Whose Son is He?" Our answer is as quick as Peter's, and as loving: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living

God!" Grant us a deeper faith in Thee and a deeper love of Thee and of Thy Church and of Thy truth as life goes on, and a clearer understanding of it. Amen.

II. Christian Schools.

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mark x. 14).

My brethren, we have chosen our text with a view to a short discourse on Catholic schools. Let us consider the duties of parents in this regard. We begin with this self-evident fact: In nearly all cases the school forms the character of its pupils. It often has a monopoly of this; for multitudes of children have parents incapable of forming their dispositions—ignorant parents, or vicious ones. Not seldom one of the parents is dead, or even both are dead. If both parents are living, and are even ideally competent to instruct their children in religion, yet the school has control of their little ones five days of the week, total and formative control. Look at it in reference to the Church's efforts to instruct children.

The Church establishes a Sunday-school. In this an hour's instruction is given weekly, with perhaps an additional hour in midweek, every effort being made to have it thorough. Still, it is but a small provision of training compared with a lesson in religion given regularly each day during the five school days: it is a case of one hour against five. Thus a Catholic school has fivefold the advantage of a Sunday-school for making good Catholics. Nor does this take into account various other circumstances in favor of imparting knowledge in school hours, and by the regular school teachers, in a well-appointed schoolhouse, and with thoroughly systematized work.

If you send your child to the un-Catholic school, a systematic, professional, highly-trained and highly-paid school system has him for the five working days of the week. During all that time the name and doctrine and worship of Jesus Christ and His Church are tabooed by law. Do you hope to counteract that unchristian influence, to fill up that emptiness of soul by one hour's teaching in a Sunday-school? If you say that your Sunday-school is especially good, I ask you is it good enough to overcome such difference as that?

We do not speak here of the possible anti-Catholic influence in the public schools. What we say is simply this: the school forms the man, measurably in every case, wholly in a multitude of cases. Therefore an unchristian school always has a measurable unchristian influence in forming men and women, and actually does form multitudes of children of Christian parents into wholly unchristian men and women. Experience and observation furnish an infinitude of proofs of this statement.

A pastor may have a first-rate Sunday-school, as Sunday-schools go. But none the less he feels in duty bound to have the best possible Catholic day school besides. He does not grudge to spend largely of your money for maintaining a parish school, standing as he does the sponsor of your conscience before God and His Church. That Church has ever made the establishing of Christian schools the foremost duty of parish priests, and the sending of children to them the sacred duty of Catholic parents.

The reason is always the same, whether for the Popes, the Bishops, and the people. The school forms the man. It does so by teaching and correction and example; by companionship and prizes and school opinions and traditions. And our children must be formed into Christian men and women.

When the school with its overwhelming influence leaves Christ and His religion totally out of the formation of character, it is calculated to convince the pupils that Christ and His religion may safely be left out of their subsequent lives.

We admit that this danger—indeed it is worse than a danger—is partly counteracted by specially good Catholic influences at home. Yet multitudes of the children of such homes have suffered deep, nay, often final and fatal injury from being trained in irreligious schools. We admit, too, that God's secret graces often keep men and women fast in the faith in spite of this and other grave dangers. But let us not trust to miracles for our salvation, or for that of the souls committed to our care.

We warn Catholic parents to run no risks in dealing with the immortal destiny of their children. Send your little ones to a Catholic school, where, together with every good secular training, they will be at the same time solidly grounded in the principles and practices of that faith which is necessary for their eternal salvation.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. The Sacrament of Penance.

"Be of good heart, son; thy sins are forgiven thee."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

The friends of the paralytic, as they asked his cure, thought only of his bodily misery, but Jesus was concerned with his soul's paralysis, his sins. For these the poor man was doubtless truly sorry, but he felt disheartened. Hence our Savior encouraged him and gave him God's pardon. This was characteristic; His name is Jesus, a Savior, "for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). The prophet of old had spoken of His best gift of miracles when he said: "He shall heal the contrite of heart" (Isaias lxi. 1). That is a greater miracle than to heal the broken body, but it is not open to men's eyes. Hence our Lord joined to it the cure of the palsy: "But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then said He to the man sick of the palsy): Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house." Notice that our Master puts forward His humanity and ours in His claim of absolution—"the Son of Man;" an evident foreshadowing of that administered by His priests in the Sacrament of Penance.

Consider the great wonders of conversion which our Redeemer wrought, and which are associated with confession of sin. The "woman that was a sinner" (Luke vii. 37) walked openly to His side at the Pharisee's banquet, regardless of sour looks and taunting words; a braver deed than any soldier's upon the field of warlike glory. Her very shame was her claim to pardon, and her tears were the price of those eternal words: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." Consider the case of the woman taken in adultery (John viii. 3), who was dragged to confession as a criminal to the gallows, but yet trusted in Him for pardon (as we may truly believe)—to Jesus, Whom her enemies would force to condemn her to be stoned to death. And she beheld Him rout her bloodthirsty foes; she heard Him say to her: "Neither will I condemn thee." Consider the confession of the penitent thief, that he was made a penitent on the very scene of his blasphemy against Christ, on the very gibbet which he had merited by a lifetime of robbery (Luke xxiii. 40-42). Yet the whole Sacrament of Penance, with all its graces, was our Savior's immediate gift to this raw and new-made penitent. Brethren, what an absolution was that, administered by the Savior of men with His dying breath: "Amen, I say to thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." And now consider that all of these are types of the absolution given by the successors of Christ's Apostles, to whom He said, the eighth day after His resurrection: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John xx. 23). How plain is "the goodness of this great and sovereign God," says De Ponte, "how plain His desire to forgive us our sins, not seventy times seven times, as He had commanded His Apostle Peter to forgive his wrongdoers (Matt. xviii. 22), but times without number or limitation. O merciful Jesus," that devout writer exclaims, "seventy times seven and thousands of times more may the angels of heaven praise Thee for the favor Thou dost to us sinners upon earth. As often as we may sin, so often, if we ask pardon of Thee, Thou wilt pardon us, for Thy mercy is so many times greater than our misery" *(Meditations, Sacrament of Penance).*

Yet again we must consider that the effects of this sacrament are manifold, for much more than forgiveness is bestowed, infinite though the value of that boon be. For this "fountain of living water" (Zach. xiii. 1), besides being a fountain that is never dry and is always open to wash away the uncleanness of our guilt, at the same time instills into our souls hatred of sin and love of virtue; and it gives us the courage of champions of God in our noble warfare for the future.

How often does a sinner kneel half-hearted to confess his sins, and rise with a heart wholly overflowing with love of Jesus Crucified? The deep interest of his Father confessor, his tender sympathy for his difficulties, the ardent zeal and the evident wisdom with which he counsels him, the tranquil patience with which he listens to his panic-stricken and often petulant tale—all this, if it were merely human, would make the confessional the sweetest shrine for the pilgrimage of our fallen nature. But it is not human, it is divine. Every word uttered there is made holy by the breathing of the Spirit of Christ. It is by the attraction of the Holy Spirit that men's souls are drawn to confession, as iron is drawn to the loadstone. Multitudes of penitents, especially those who have been the worst of sinners, bear witness that only the dread of the deep pit fetched them to the priest's feet; they were hunted to the confessional by the wolves of an evil memory. And when they leave there they feel that they bear with them an interior healing as palpable as was the outward cure of the man in this day's Gospel, to whom the Lord said: "Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house."

The benefits of confession are—not always but very often—commensurate with the sufferings of the penitent: the law of cost and compensation is a divine law. The very Calvary of the sinner's experience is confession, that assemblage of "combats without, fears within" (2

Cor. vii. 5), external struggles to get away from bad companions, internal alarms torturing the thoughts with forebodings of relapse—the very goblins of mortal terror blocking the way. But the crucifixion of the soul makes its resurrection all the more glorious. The noblest reward of Paradise is over and over again due to the undaunted courage of that one act—going to that first confession after a course of depravity; the most heroic deed of the penitent's whole life. The after feeling of consolation is accordingly so deep flowing a love of Jesus Crucified as to bear marks of the grace of predestination to eternal bliss. It is the great event of his life. He will remember it with joy in the article of death. He will thank God for it with unstinted gratitude through the eternal years. And whosoever has by prayer or advice or example brought about a hard sinner's confession, be he priest or layman who does him that favor, has won a crown of eternal splendor.

To this sacrament men come as to their best act of humility; low rating of self is well done when it is the uncovering of sinfulness. Hence the reward is ample: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii. 14). The soul is in little danger of boasting of its abnegation when the process of it is confession, made to a fellow-mortal, made on account of Christ's command, by inspiration of His grace, in coöperation with His appointed "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v. 18). Confession's humility elevates one above all mental aberrations of self-righteousness—all is secret self-contempt, no parade and pomp is conceivable in that lowliness. It emancipates him from his sensual appetites, nay, it raises him above even guileless nature with a temperate and chastened self-gratulation. In Holy Baptism, indeed, newness of life is imparted by the new birth of divine grace, that sacrament being principally given as the original divine reconciliation. The Sacrament of Penance is the second and more practical, and the oft-repeated embrace of divine love. It provides on God's part His Church's close scrutiny of her child's misery, her intimate communication with him in the sacredest confidence, her joyful grant of the divine pardon, a new sacramental grace, light, and courage for the future. On the sinner's part it is the prodigal's return home to his Father to receive His embrace, to feel the anointing of His tears of welcome, to proclaim to Him: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee!" (Luke xv. 21.) And presently he assists at the banquet of perfect love at the altar.

"God is love" (1 John iv. 8): so says the pardoned sinner, and then he adds: "I live, now not I, but God's love liveth in me." As would say a piece of iron glowing with fire white hot: "I burn, now not I, but fire burneth in me." "Nothing but sin," says St. Francis de Sales, "should be our sadness; and when it does sadden us, we should realize that holy joy is at hand" (*Letters to Persons in Religion,* Mackey, p. 343). The sadness of death is in impenitence, and the joy of life is in the miracle of pardon.

After the palsied man had been cured, "all were astonished, and they glorified God. And they were filled with fear, saying: We have seen wonderful things today" (Luke v. 26). Most of them were amazed, because they saw a crippled creature but now lying helpless upon the ground, suddenly stand upon his feet at the mere word of a fellowman—a prophet, indeed, but yet a man to their eyes. A few may have understood things better, and these were amazed and, as it were, stunned that the power of forgiving sins was as plain before them as the strong limbs of the newly-healed paralytic: and this is the effect upon all of us of making a good confession.

How beautiful a prayer is that which begs God to love me: O Lord! love me as a Father, love me as a Brother, love me as a Spouse. And inasmuch as God is love, that prayer is the most welcome that He can hear. But yet for all of us it has a variance which makes it dearer still to Him: O God! love me as the Physician of my soul. My brethren, to love is to live, yea even for the Deity. And so great is the desire of God to love us, that He would have us pray: Love me, O God: by Thy very life I call upon Thee to love me! Now there is a yet plainer meaning to this. For as soon as I ask what the love of God will practically do to me, the answer is that it will transform me into the very "image of His Son" (Rom. viii. 29), my soul being entirely cleansed from sin. Yes, to be made one with God is the miraculous boon I covet when I crave to be pardoned. And thus does the Sacrament of Penance effect God's dearest purpose upon me, and His life becomes mine. Little do we dream of the marvels of a good confession, thinking only of the spiritual paralysis of which we are cured, without adverting sufficiently to the new life of love, by which we say with St. Paul: "And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

II. Patience.

"In patience you shall possess your souls" (Luke xxi. 19).

My brethren, patience is a form of charity. St. Paul so teaches us in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (xiii. 4): "Charity is patient!" In other words, if I love anyone I will be lenient and kindly with him; and he may maltreat me with impunity. Also, in dealing with God, we must be patient, lest we should repine if He distresses us; we endure it all because we love Him. In His case we know also that He loves us, and sends us trials to practise us in trusting Him blindly. Thus says the Apostle: "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope. And hope confoundeth not" (Rom. v. 3, 4, 5).

And we support one another's failings by patient charity. Why does a mother uncomplainingly endure the peevish, obstinate, disobedient conduct of her little child? Because she loves it. And she knows it loves her. If you love me you may almost kill me. Now sometimes we have a kind heart towards another, but we do not turn our kindness into patient endurance of that other's defects. Charity and patience are mutually convertible virtues.

Thanks be to God, there are many Christians who practise heroic patience. We often meet with a gentle wife, who for God's love endures the brutality of a drunken husband: for God's love and because she loves her husband and loves their children too deeply to shrink from even a lifelong martyrdom for their sakes and in honor of God.

Sometimes a peaceful husband leads a life of unspeakable sadness, enduring the wolfish temper of his wife, perhaps even her intemperance. He does it patiently, because He loves God, and for His sake he tries to love that being, the most unlovable in all the world, a scolding, snarling wife. For both these cases—and they are typical of great numbers of honest Christians—God reserves a specially high place in Paradise as the reward of patience. And "The Lord is nigh unto them whose hearts are troubled" (Ps. xxxiii. 19). Even in this their life of well-nigh unendurable misery, He often whispers peace in their inmost souls. And very frequently He rewards them by a total, not seldom a miraculous change for the better in the one they love so well, and have endured so patiently.

This virtue is, again, a very necessary one for parents. The virtues of the cloister are indeed glorious. But many fathers and mothers rival the merits of holy hermits by their gentle endurance of their children's wickedness—children who in return despise them, who are shiftless and profligate, intemperate, and wholly irreligious, and excessively abusive. But the patience of the father and mother is deeper than their children's depravity, outlasts their persistent ingratitude, and is finally rewarded with their eternal salvation.

This is a virtue usually little known and little practised in early life. Young people are exacting, stand on their rights, are thoughtless of the rights of others, take all favors and give none back—too often this is the case. Later on they find that true joy is Christ's joy—the bearing of others' burdens out of love. And nothing is so well calculated to wean us from love of this world as patient suffering on account of others. There is no grace more necessary for us than to become disgusted with this world, for if we are fond of present joys, unless these be truly religious, how shall we long for future ones?

Finally, patience is the purgatorian virtue. It cleanses our motives in serving others for God's sake. If our only reward here is ingratitude, sometimes very base ingratitude, we must patiently wait for a future reward. Now purgatory, as the name implies, is that future state in which every motive of life but God alone is driven out of our heart's innermost sanctuary, for in purgatory patient endurance is the chief form of love that we are permitted to practise. We spoke of the lack of patience evident in younger Christians. To them especially does this teaching of the Holy Ghost seem to be directed: " Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for trial. Humble thy heart and endure......Wait on God with patience; join thyself to God and endure...... Take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation" (Ecclus. ii. 1-5).

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Eternal Punishment.

"Then said the king to his servants: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

These terrible words of our Savior refer to eternal punishment. When we hear them, we can only bow down in the lowliness of faith and utter our Credo. From this teaching, and from very many other teachings of our Redeemer, as well as from those of His Apostles and of His ancient prophets, we know with a certainty of supernatural force that there is a hell or place of punishment hereafter, into which impenitent souls are cast immediately after death, there to remain forever. And we know that they shall suffer diversely according to each one's degree of wickedness. Such is the article of Catholic faith concerning eternal punishment.

Furthermore this belief has been held by almost all mankind: that the bad are separated forever from the good in the next life, the one class full of happiness, the other full of misery—hot fire, and horrid companionship and filthy bodily conditions being their torture. But Christians maintain that the principal and essential woe of the wicked shall be their loss of God, whose possession is the only happiness possible hereafter; a loss that is the necessary sequel to mortal sin, which gives up God for the sake of wicked pleasures. Such is the common belief of the human race; such is the faith of Catholics.

A general unanimity of opinion on a matter essential to human happiness, among all the races of mankind extending through all its ages, is an irrefragable proof of any doctrine. The common consent of man is an infallible motive of certitude. It can result only from the persistent will of the Creator to keep up the tradition of an originally revealed truth, or some necessary action of the human reason on primary and axiomatic truth. We have documentary evidence of this consent in nearly every trace of writing ancient or modern religions have furnished touching the future state of souls. And the human reason knows by the unaided light of nature that there is as much difference between right and wrong as there is between heaven and hell.

What a stupendous fact it is that the whole Christian religion has ever sternly insisted on this terrible doctrine. It is founded on our Savior's express and oft-repeated teaching. Listen to His own words: "Then shall He say to them also that shall be on His left hand: Depart from me into everlasting fire......and these shall go into everlasting punishment" (Matt. xxv. 41-46).

"It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not extinguished" (Mark ix. 46, 47). Indeed, the numerous texts from the New Testament are too familiar to require further quotation.

The essential punishment of the lost follows their willful and guilty failure to attain to the vision of God. Let us consider this for a moment. "The face of God," says Father Faber, "is the infinite magnet of all creatures." Truth, goodness, beauty, as we know and enjoy them in this life, what are they but types of absolute truth, infinite goodness and perfect beauty—the concretion of truth into a personal Being Whose existence is infinite beauty and goodness, a personal Being Whom we can know and love personally and in a perfect manner, and be by Him loved with an infinite tenderness. It is the glimpse of this Being's face in nature, it is the luminous shadow of His presence in the dim light of conscience, it is the innate image, the divine royalty perceived in the soul's native dignity, it is God thus foretold and promised, that makes this life anyway tolerable to noble spirits; "as lights held up along the shore" cheer the mariner struggling in darkness with the tempest. But the best knowledge and love of God, which this life gives us, only stimulate an appetite which this life cannot satisfy. What we want is God as He actually is in heaven.

Now hell is the eternal and hopeless deprivation of the vision of God. Hell is the eternal perdition of man's destiny. It is human nature inhumanized or dehumanized by its own fault. Man forever lacking the necessary complement of his being, is man in hell. That which a man ought to be is what he is completed. Here we are inchoate, creatures of longing and not of attainment, children of promise, but not of heritage. To be permanently left in that state by one's own fault, forever to be longing with no hope of enjoying, forever the guilty cause of one's own eternal disinheritance, is to be in hell. Sin is the antagonism between the human soul and the happiness of God. Hell is that antagonism made perpetual. To be in hell is to be by one's own fault permanently and hopelessly averted from God. Hell is rebellion against God made perpetual. Hell is thus located in the soul itself, as well as in the positive inflictions of divine justice, such as the fire and the flames of that dreadful place.

The agony of this is not fully appreciated by us now, because now we have joys that, whilst we are in a state of sin, can take, in a kind of way, the place of the friendship of God. Yet even here to be without God in the world and without hope (Eph. ii. 12) becomes at last a great misery. Nevertheless, the pleasures of the animal passions, the success of ambition, the luxury of riches, give a counterfeit joy, and delude the soul with a phantom of its destiny. But in eternity, where the senses can no longer usurp the throne of reason, where man can no longer blind himself with passion and be led away by brutish pleasures, his soul must have the infinite God for its joy, or be an aching void forever. The lost soul has indeed lost God as Friend, as Spouse, as Father; but in another sense it has not lost Him. The condemned soul is forever penetrated with God. It is penetrated with God as the infinitude of justice. The knowledge of God in the super-sensible state of the next life is far brighter and deeper than it is here, and He is far better known in hell than here; the agony of hell is that the soul knows God to be worthy of infinite love, and can and will only give Him a deadly hatred; the heart being withered with the degradation of hating One Whom it knows to have deserved an infinite affection. Mortal sin is contempt for God because it prefers the base objects of passion to the excellence of divinity. Now contempt for God cannot exist in the future state, because no man can despise God when he has fallen into His hands for final settlement; and hence contempt for God in this life is changed hereafter into a positive and deadly hatred; hatred for a Being Whom the sinner's reason tells him is infinitely lovable. "It is this conflict," says Bourdaloue, "of love and hatred, desire and aversion, of separation and seeking, all in reference to the same object, that we name hell." And St. Chrysostom says that this suffering, called by theologians the pain of loss, is incomparably greater than any pain of sense.

Brethren, to learn what may be the qualities of that place of torment and the conditions of existence there, listen to the Word of God: "For Topheth is prepared from yesterday, prepared by the King, deep and wide; and the nourishment thereof is fire and much wood; and the breath of the Lord as a torrent of brimstone doth kindle it" (Isaias xxx. 33). Consider its enormous depth and width and height, the smoke and the fire, the darkness broken only by the lurid flames; especially consider the beings who are there incarcerated, their pains of body and their pains of mind. St. Teresa once had a vision of hell. God showed her the sufferings to which she would have been condemned if she had violated His law and died impenitent. The Saint declares that after that vision, the hardest things in God's service seemed easy to her. And thenceforth she had so deep a compassion for sinners, that the mere thought of them set her praying for their conversion with weeping eyes. May God grant that such shall be the effect of our meditation on the fate of sinners hereafter.

We sometimes wonder at God's patience in permitting men to sin against Him, to ruin not only their own souls, for which He died on the cross, but the souls of others committed to their care. He permits them to destroy their children's souls; openly to profane and disgrace His religion; to become slaves and to make others slaves of the archfiend Satan their whole lives long. Brethren, mysteriously enough God does allow all this; but bear in mind that there is one thing He does not allow: He will not allow the sinner to wipe his memory clear of his wicked deeds. The impenitent sinner shall never forget. You shall die in your body, but not in your memory. And your memory shall give its own immortality to your sins. You shall recall the first ones of early days; then the frenzy of sin in the depravity of the earlier years of your manhood, your deliberate, habitual, obstinate sinfulness in later life. All your sins will cling to you in perdition, will absorb your thoughts, will burn hotter in your soul than the fire shall burn in your body—and forever. Can you calmly run the risk of undergoing such a fate?

Those sins whose number you now so easily forget, you then will count over with nameless agony. Count them over? One by one you will live them over, and study over all their dreadful scenes and circumstances. You will be tormented with the recollection of the shortness of their enjoyment compared with the length of their punishment; their utter baseness; your reckless audacity in the face of God; your brazen presumption. "The wicked man shall see, and shall be angry, he shall gnash with his teeth and pine away" (Ps. cxi. 10). Are there none now in hell who remember us? Is your name now called in hell? Are there none there who were your partners in sin, and who this moment demand with frantic curses that you shall be made their partners in paying the penalty? It has perhaps happened that you have enjoyed receiving and reading a certain bad letter, and that you have read it more than once. How will you enjoy reading it over and over again for all eternity? All this bears out what is often seen even in this life, namely, that a bad man's thoughts are a worse torture to him than any fire could be. So does the prophet teach, that in the next life the sinner in some respects makes his own hell: "Destruction is thy own, O Israel" (Osee xiii. 9).

Brethren, think of the sand upon the shores of all the oceans of the world. What is one grain of this sand compared to it all? Ah, then, let us ask ourselves, what is our little life here compared to the infinite ages in eternity? What if those ages are to be spent in hell!

II. Bearing the Yoke.

"And he [the king] sent his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage; and they would not come."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

My brethren, our Redeemer teaches us the virtue of obedience in this parable, principally by condemning disobedience, a vice which sets up one's own will against that of his lawful superior. Obedience is primarily, and indeed essentially, an interior virtue, being concerned with Him of Whom we say with the Apostle: "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. i. 17). Him we honor when we obey those men and women whom His providence has placed over us. It behooves us to make submission to outward authority always conscious of this; for this is its real and divine motive. Even without that, obedience is necessary for order; the proper relation of one to another, of the higher to the lower, is needed to be observed in every human association, from that of parents and children up to the Pope and the holy college of Cardinals; from the village constables up to the President and Congress. And the management of faulty and foolish spirits is an instant need in every kind of community.

We nowadays look for that manly trait of character called initiative; in a rightly formed character it is always present. For Providence calls upon the men and women of our time more than formerly to govern themselves, nay to choose betimes the rulers of the whole community. Such is indeed God's will, not only in political but in many other matters. Yet does this by no means indicate His repudiation of the prophet's teaching: "It is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth" (Lam. iii. 27). Such a one's independence of action is equipped with the wholesome restraints of discipline, which are a great deal more than a mere safety brake. For discipline is an economy of force. Furthermore, it has passed into a proverb, that no man is fit to lead who has not learned how to follow. St. Peter would have Christians all "children of obedience" (1 Peter i. 14); and yet in his day they were trained to stand up one by one and offer their lives for Christ in martyrdom. The boldest initiative ever known was that shown by St. Paul his life through. Yet he began by asking: "Lord what wouldst Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6)—a question answered from heaven by the substitution of obedience to a human master, Ananias, for that paid to Jesus Christ direct.

The same Apostle trained his followers in that very spirit. He looked for independence of character to begin with, for the instant need of religion in those days was manly courage. And yet hear what he said to a favorite disciple: "Trusting in thy obedience, I have written to thee; knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say" (Philemon i. 21). A venturesome nature is at its best when its energy overflows with a generous obedience; a timid nature can but obey mechanically. Simply obedient, prompt, affectionate, wide awake for new ways of complying with what is commanded, boldly assuming the superior's point of view—we know not of any character more useful to men or pleasing to God than one formed on that model.

In the category of perfection there is hardly any virtue more compendious than Christian obedience. Of course it involves self-disinterestedness, for an obedient man must have loose views of his rights and strict views of his duties. He is a placid stream of energy. He is so quietly energized that an onlooker would never think that he was other than the originator of both the plan and the specifications of the work he is engaged upon.

The energy of obedience is, we repeat, a placid energy. This recalls the memory of an elder sister of ours who was skillful in embroidery. We noticed that for her finer work, she stretched the linen cloth on a hoop so tightly that it was made perfectly even and smooth. This enabled her easily to sew in the fine pattern in all its beautiful forms and varied colors without puckering and wrinkling the material. So it is that obedience smooths and levels the mind for every good work, and, best of all, fits it for the action of divine grace. Creases and wrinkles, that is to say the hitches and the twists of our native character, need to be flattened down to the fair level of good sense, calmed and equalized by gentle yielding to our associates, especially our parents and our priests, and all and every one of the higher and lower masters and counsellors Providence has assigned us. Much help in this is had from a definite rule or custom of life, well-chosen and firmly-established for the meeting of our daily tasks. God employs a rule of life as a gardener does a trellis to train a vine upon. Upon our routine of occupations we fasten the vine of our daily existence. To use another comparison—that of Père Crasset: "The blood flows through the veins, the grace of God through our good rules and customs."

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. The Obedience of Charity.

"Being subject one to another in the fear of Christ."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

My brethren, we discoursed last Sunday upon the virtue of obedience, strictly so-called, by which we do what we are bid by those who are set above us by God's providence, do it cheerfully and with God's will in our mind as a motive: the obedience of justice. To-day, following the injunction of the Apostle in this day's Epistle, we shall consider the obedience of charity. It is gratuitous obedience. It is our free will contribution to the common stock of peace and mutual affection. We do what others bid us do, not from justice, but out of affection; and especially because God loves both us and them. We can give good example that way. We can good-naturedly smooth the ruffled temper of our associates—a mighty work of charity especially in family, but even in business life. We can broaden the channel of that river of peace which Scripture says, "maketh the city of God joyful" (Ps. xlv. 5).

Obedience pure and simple—that of justice—is preferring another's will before our own because of his superior place. Christian obedience is doing so out of reverence for his place, as he holds it in God's stead; doing so in imitation of Christ; acting thus with love. Now when one prefers another's will to his own, not because of the other's superior office, but because of affection for him for Christ's sake, he practises what spiritual writers call the obedience of charity. The obedience of justice may be rendered for the sake of good order to one or a few superiors; that of charity is given to "every human creature for God's sake," we are glad thus to "honor all men" (1 Peter ii. 13, 17). This is far above the obedience of self-interest, which may easily be the trait of a catiff; for the obedience of charity is a gift of love, the trait of an affectionate man. How noble a grace is that which has so much regard for God's will, that we make our present association an opportunity for spreading His joy, unregardful of our neighbor's faults, big ones in the perverse, little ones in good people—their very whims and oddities. This kind of service is universally the obedience of the heart.

This obedience to one's equals may be given from an obliging disposition, and then it is a form of brotherly love. If one mingles with this a sincere wish to displace his own will by another's, he adds a quantum of humble self-abasement. Name it the obedience of humility or of charity as you please, it is a lovely trait. Practised often it harmonizes the differences of character inevitable in our common life. Take an illustration from music. The obedience of charity, ready and unfaltering, produces a union of actions and sentiments like the union of sound in a chorus of singers singing a noble hymn in unison. Our words and deeds, nay our very thoughts, form a blended and single voice made up of many sweet tones. What is more glorious than a magnificent chorus of a multitude of powerful voices praising God in unison! If there is any music preferable to this, it is that of a delightful harmony of voices, all spirits praising the Lord with one heart, yet each in a different tone, all lovingly regarding one another, each adding his contribution to the concord of heavenly praise, each uttering a different but harmonious expression of love, and all instinctively responsive to the divine Choirmaster Who directs them all: "Let every spirit praise the Lord" (Ps. cl. 5). So we may say of one who for Christ's sake is so sensitive to the happiness of others, that his entire life is attuned to kindliness. We say of an ideal family, that for the livelong year there was never a discordant note among them.

Blessed is the Christian who has formed such conduct into a habit. Habits: all good habits are to be rated high. God knows that these wild steeds of ours, our inner emotions and our outer doings, are hard to catch and to break into steady-going usefulness. How easily they slip the halter, how soon they are worn down; how easily we forget to feed them and groom them with the Gospel of Christ. Now among these good habits there is a hierarchy. There are the habits dependent on the mere impetus of continuity, by which rudimentary acts of religion, our daily prayers, for example, perpetuate themselves; they are said by force of custom, they are part and parcel of the furnishing of our sleeping room. These are, as it were the altar boys. Then there are the high prelates of habit, habits of thought. These touch the sources and open the fountains of faith and love and hope, of sorrow for sin, joy and sympathy, remembrances of Calvary and divine instincts of human brotherhood. Ah, my brethren, pray that these habits may be installed on the throne of your spirit. They are like those ever revolving wheels of the prophet making the celestial circuit of the cherubim of love within our daily existence (Ezech. x. 9). Habits of kind obedience are the masters of the soul. They generate the other friendly tendencies, and correct them; and they sanctify all. When love of Christ and our neighbor fits into times and places by inherent energy, it can stop every imperfect habit short of, such, for example, as that of blind antipathies. These gentle feelings, when grown indispensable by long custom, constantly advertise me of the reason why anything between me and another is good, namely, not because it is within my rights, but because it helps him to God's mercies; according to the Apostle: "All things are lawful to me, but all things do not edify. Let no man seek his own, but that which is another's" (1 Cor. x. 23, 24). Therefore among the nobler sort of habits, that of cheerful compliance ranks high.

St. Luke tells us of the life of Jesus at Nazareth, which was nearly the whole term of His sojourn on earth, very briefly, saying: "He was subject to them" (Luke ii. 51). This indicates our Redeemer's preference among opportunities to do good. The obedience of charity—could it receive higher praise? Mary and Joseph were dear to Him, and the virtue of affectionate subjection to them, who adored the very ground He trod on, how exceedingly prominent does it hereby become in His life, and therefore in our estimation. And after all, my brethren, although we may have our Mount of Calvary and our Mount of the Ascension, our eras of martyrdom and of glory, nevertheless the life at home and at the shop or store is the divinely-chosen arena of our striving: there must we win our crown. To be subject to His household familiars was the method chosen by the Son of God for advancing in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and man" (Luke ii. 52).

The bird is weighted with feathers, but these enable her to fly. Could there be a lighter equipment with a more useful purpose? So the freedom of a good man is weighted with this burden of impulse and longing to agree with his associates, but this feather weight enables him to rise above selfishness into the pure air of brotherly love, and to live in it as in his native element. The soul which is at liberty (as the world understands that term) from thinking of others' interests and caring for them as a servant cares for a master, is like a bird plucked of its feathers—relieved of weight but stripped of power. Downright obedience to authority, obedience pure and simple, was to St. Benedict like the hoops circling the barrel; it held his monks together for their life's work. But in his Holy Rule this Arch-Abbot of all devout living, enjoins exactly that friendly obedience among equals which we are considering: "Not only is true obedience to be exhibited by all towards the Father Abbot, but the brothers must also obey one another, knowing that by way of this kind of obedience they shall come to God" (*Holy Rule,* lxxi.).

Every saint who lived with other men soon became everybody's servant. The record is invariable, whether you consider St. Louis, King of France, or St. Francis of Assisi, captain of bands of wandering missionaries. It was always a spirit and a practice similar to that of the King of kings and Abbot of all communities. Listen to His claim and His boast of it, and make a resolution to give yourself the joy of imitating Him in it: "You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister. And he that will be first among you, shall be your servant. Even as the Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto but to minister." (Matt. xx. 25-28). The dearest thing Jesus had to give was His own will, and He incessantly gave it to His Father. Did He do otherwise with it towards His Apostles? Think you, my brethren, that He is less than absolutely in earnest when He bids us imitate Him in ministering to our associates and becoming their servants? St. Teresa, with her usual bluntness, enforces this rule upon us thus: "Let others teach you, let others order you, let others rule over you, and you will become perfect" (*Maxim* 254).

Even worldlings know that a rational man must be willing to serve if he would attain to rule: even a king must obey. There is no man so rich as to be above the money market, or so learned as to be independent of literary and scientific criticism. Only shallow minds dream of universal sway, each in so small a kingdom as a family or a workshop. But in that kingdom of God which is the Christian family, the rule of parents is insupportably galling if it be not sweetened by kind consideration for differences of temperament among the children—for Christ's sake. For assuredly the management of unruly spirits is only possible by kindly complaisance—and then it is not difficult. "Even wild beasts grow tame with mild treatment," teaches St. Ephrem. It is a true saying, that no one must obey so many masters as a parent of many children. Claim the rule of your house if you will, and dispute it with your wife; the feeble cry of your sick child ends your disputes, and manifestly proves that the baby rules the house. How high a perfection is that which recognizes the call of the heavenly Father's will in the whims and oddities of foolish brethren. The man of science studies the deepest problems of organic life in an earthworm, and the man of God explores the best sweetness of the Gospel of Christ in the study and management of the frailties of his brethren. We hear much (and not too much) of the "purgative way" in the spiritual life, which is the introduction to Christian perfection; it is purifying our hearts to make room for Christ's virtue. Well, the prince of the Apostles thus fits to it our virtue of gentle submissiveness: "Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity, with brotherly love" (1 Peter i. 22).

In regard to this virtue of affectionate submissiveness, St. Paul's words are exceedingly appropriate: "The charity of Christ urgeth us" (2 Cor. v. 14). When "the Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us" (John i. 14), God's love pressed Him to deliver Himself over to us, and now by example and precept He urges and presses and constrains us to do the like among ourselves, and to become to our fellowmen as much a servant as He was to His creatures. The Son of God was obedient to the laws of the material world. He was obedient as an infant unborn; as a little nurseling in His Mother's arms; as a boy He obeys

His foster-father most affectionately in his shop and home. Even when He could begin His "Father's business" (Luke ii. 49) of preaching the Gospel in the temple at Jerusalem, He willed to postpone it because His Mother's plea for His company in her home at Nazareth was a plea for His obedience of love, and that made it His Father's business instantly to go down with her to Nazareth. Upon that submissiveness He places the whole purpose of His life for eighteen years, after having given it twelve years already. Surely here are arguments for the charity of obedience, and the obedience of charity of an immensely pressing nature.

II. The Divine Monitor.

"But when the Paraclete cometh, Whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, Who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me" (John xv. 26).

My brethren, our Redeemer hereby promised the Apostles and their successors that fullness of spiritual wisdom for their office of teachers of mankind which they soon were to make effectual in beginning the salvation of the world. But not only to the Apostles and their successors, for their teaching office, but to every one of the faithful He promised the guidance of the Holy Ghost for their individual salvation. What is meant by that expression: the guidance of the Holy Spirit? This certain truth: God liberally communicates motives, sentiments, lights, and interior longings to those who desire to be His servants, whereby He inflames and dilates their hearts in order to induce them to walk in His ways with greater confidence and facility. He enlightens their understandings with heavenly truths, enkindles their wills with His love, and sometimes teaches them more in one moment by the unction of His Spirit than all the masters and books in the world could do in many years (see *Sufferings of Jesus,* by Father Thomas of Jesus, Introduction, ch. ii.).

This stands as the greatest fact of our interior existence: God constantly seeks personally to guide us in the way of salvation. But to this is joined the outer guidance of God, by His lawfully appointed representatives among us. Follow both—for, taken together, these two are the integral will of the same heavenly Master. Follow both, and you possess all; the outer serving the inner by sobering our over-eagerness; and in the sacraments by furnishing a perpetual renewal of divine interior influence. Meanwhile the interior guidance has, among other marks of validity, this plain one: it is peaceable. "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me; for He will speak peace unto His people" (Ps. lxxxiv. 9).

When does the Holy Ghost visit us? When we feel our hearts touched with sorrow for offending Jesus Christ. Instilling contrition for sin on account of God our Savior, that is the beginning of the work of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. He bears testimony to the rights of our Savior which we have grossly violated. The protest of the sinner's conscience is the testimony of God against him. The voice of God is our remorseful feeling. Shame, self-hatred, accompanied with fear of the fire of hell, and having at least some suggestion and desire of recovering the friendship of Christ—this is the inspiration of God. If sinners but realized that such remorse of conscience is the direct claim of God upon them, they would not smother it. To them St. Paul says: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. iv. 30). They sometimes go to confession and communion, but what is their motive? It is lest they shall grieve their devout relatives. They make their Easter duty lest they shall lose cast as Catholics—they deal with God, indeed, but very indirectly and feebly, principally on account of His friends.

They are like one who had rather converse with his father by telephone than face to face—they want to be in a position to shut off the divine messages, and call them up again whensoever they please. This shutting off God's grace is thus characterized by the Apostle: "Extinguish not the Spirit" (1 Thess. v. 19). What a dastardly crime is that, my brethren. It is perpetrated by some Catholics.

Holy Church often quotes the words of the Wise Man: "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world" (Wisd. i. 7). And that omnipresent Spirit, wherever it finds a moral vacuum, instantly fills it. Is it a heart emptied of worldly desires? Oh, what a blessing! God fills that heart with His love. Is it a heart emptied of divine things? God fills it with His reproaches. All religious joy is the "consolation of the Holy Spirit" (Acts ix. 31). All devout grief for sin, all painful longings and foreboding about future sins and their punishment, is the "unspeakable groanings" of the Holy Spirit in our behalf (Rom. viii. 26). How few among us realize that our religious life is a divine life.

Our text reminds us that the Father and Son and the Holy Ghost work together for the Kingship of Christ in our souls and in our lives, the divine action being, by our Savior's words, attributed to the Third Person: "He shall give testimony of Me." This is well illustrated by the Blessed Virgin's words to the waiters at the wedding of Cana: "His Mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye" (John ii. 5). This she said by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. All we hear in sermons means exactly that: Whatsoever the Spirit of Jesus Christ says to you, that do, do it immediately, and do it when and where He directs by His Holy Church. All the good example, exhortation, warning of friends takes on the Holy Ghost's authority; it is sent to bring us under the divine guidance of the Spirit of Christ.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Good Reading.

"The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."—*From this Sunday's Epistle.*

The Word of God here referred to, my brethren, is both spoken and written, for we call hearing a sermon hearing the word of God; and the Holy Scriptures are God's word by excellence—whose power is that of a sword, "a living and effectual sword, reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit......a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). Holy Church insists on our hearing this divine book read every Sunday at Mass. And for the reading of the New Testament daily, our Holy Father, the Pope, grants a plenary indulgence. That little book should be known by heart by every one of us, at least the four Gospels. I had rather know that divine narrative by rote than all the tables of the arithmetic. Mark it as a sign of predestination to eternal life if you are habituated to so much as fifteen minutes daily reading of this supreme book of all literature, filled as it is with the maxims of a good life, a book whose author is God and whose eloquence is the charm of all devout souls. Besides the Scriptures, there is a vast world of holy literature. The writings of the saints and of saintly men and women are, according to St. Augustine, "letters from Paradise"—letters from God, news of God and of His heroes. Why this is heavenly beatitude by anticipation.

The Christian child has his catechism at his finger tips, which trains him to the main principles and practices of his faith. Should not the grown-up Christian have his manuals of proficiency equally well possessed? They are the four Gospels. Some complain that they are wholly distracted in their prayers, the soul's thoughts being far off from the tongue's utterance. But the soul is often better served by the eye than by the tongue. No man can easily read of Christ without praying to Him.

An ideal prayer is that of reading holy things aloud, when the whole man is a living petition to God, the hand grasping the words, the voice proclaiming them, and the mind sending them upward to the mercy seat, "an oblation and an odor of sweetness in the sight of the Most High" (Ecclus. xxxv. 8).

Consider the benefits of reading about the saints. It is a wonderful comfort to have good company in the journey of life; and it is also a necessary corrective of our defects, especially of those which gnaw at the root of such essential virtues as charity and chastity. We are constantly rent asunder with contrary emotions. We no sooner float into a peaceful harbor, free at last from the storms of passion and the pirates of the high seas, than we are beset by land pirates of evil examples, and fooled by the delusions of the world: fretfulness and cowardice within and fraudulent claimants of our love without. But when even a single one of our favorite saints sounds the maxims of the Gospel in our soul's ears, we are reassured. We are so feeble-natured that the invitations of Christ's love need their echoes in the voices of His and our dearest friends, if they would catch and hold our attention. All heaven seems sometimes necessary to draw us upward towards God. The efficacy of the divine attractions depends often on one's familiarity with the saints in his more recollected moments—familiar knowledge of their writings, our mind a picture gallery of their heroic deeds. When one has read so much about holy personages that he can speak of them with a feeling of confidence as: My saints, my angels, he is mingling affectionately and very profitably among Christ's almoners. Sensible and convincing proofs of their protection, their guidance in even particular matters of daily care and responsibility, will not long be wanting to him who is fond of reading about them.

If one is working at a delicate task of painting or embroidery, and another comes between him and the window, he says: "You are standing in my light." In this case sunshine is private property—"my light." But if anyone were himself made of light, then if he stands in "our light" it is all the better for us. Thus is our Savior in His divine generation called by Holy Church "Light of light;" and St. John says of Him: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John i. 4). He both gives human light to us and He transmits to us that of the Godhead, which shines upon us in and through Him. Now this marvelous enlightenment of our souls our Lord shares with His saints, for the Apostle gives "thanks to God the Father, Who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12). A holy soul, whether living here or in the hereafter, is God's light for our souls. The light of the saints shines above upon the pages of holy history. In this life holy wisdom is spoken of as abiding in "the full assembly of the saints" (Ecclus. xxiv. 16). Devout feeling towards the saints, and exercises of religion in their honor, plainly mark views and opinions in accordance with Christ's gospel. Steadfast joy in reading about them is a foretaste of the bliss of their company in heaven.

That the whole body of the faithful might be ever closely joined to perfectly holy men and women, Jesus established His Church, which is the visible and the invisible companionship of both His earthly and heavenly discipleship. Upon our holy leaders did He accumulate an exhaustless store of holiness, that each of them might become a magnetic centre for the distribution of His virtues. "For them," He said to His Father, "do I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me" (John xvii. 20). No teaching is so successful as that of Christ's intimate friends, perfectly developed into worthy instruments of His power and love by their translation into heaven. No reading is so impressive (next to Holy Writ) as their books. Who would go beyond the story of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to learn the virtues of family life? Who does not feel the all-searching force of divine doctrine when reading St. Paul's Epistles? And this is because he could show forth the power of the

Holy Spirit by his virtues (1 Cor. ii. 4), and because in all truthfulness he could say to us: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). When we read the lives of such champions of truth as St. Athanasius, the fortitude of God is bestowed upon us, and the kindness of Christ; for of this pattern of our holy faith's defenders, St. Gregory of Nazianzen says, that when tyrants silenced his speech, his virtues supplied the place of sermons.

Humility, modesty, charity, zeal for souls, shine out in the lives of all true friends of Christ, but in some of them, these and other virtues of the Christian faith attain to heroic growth: Jesus Christ is illustrious in His saints (Ps. lxvii. 36). They imitate His virtues to that degree of perfection that following their career renews His power over men's souls. Reading the lives of the saints perpetuates His truth and love, and will continue so to do unto the latest ages. And these saints are ours, by an ownership superior even to that by which we claim the angels. Their chronicles show how they are our fellow-pilgrims in this vale of tears.

As to reading of a secular kind, my brethren, I bid you to cease reading what must be forgotten because it is dangerous, or what is not worth remembering because is is frivolous. Let not even your light reading be such as is wholly forgetable. Read poetry, which adorns truths with its becoming robes of imagination—read it and copy out its best pieces, even get them by heart. Read fiction, which is the mimic world of fact and character—good, standard novels. Read history, truthful accounts of men and nations obeying the guidance of an overruling Providence or fatally rebelling against it. All such reading is both profitable in matter and recreative in effect. Read always with a serious purpose; and remember that whatever is worth reading once is worth reading twice, and the best of it worth learning by rote. In my lightest reading (let each of you say) there must be some spirit of study. I resolve never to read just to kill time, any more than I would eat and drink as a pastime.

A man is known by his company—but better known by his reading, which initiates him into a most intimate secret society; or, again, into a lonely interview with a powerful teacher. Many a man will praise God forever in heaven on account of one certain book. Many a man will forever curse the day he learned to read. To know how to read is positively like the heavy yoke of free will, and its dangers sometimes outweighs its benefits. Think carefully of your career as a reader from the first until now, and you will not know whether to bless or curse your privilege of going to school in childhood. The difference between light reading and pleasant conversation is essential. One is innocuous, being banter and laughter, the give and take of a merry mood, the atmosphere of a time of relaxation. Light reading is often perilous, being light things whispered in a solitary interview, withdrawn from other men's scrutiny and forgetful of God's—intense, penetrating, often deliberately harmful.

Very much of the popular reading fosters idleness. Many a young person is on pins and needles at work, and at ease with a trashy novel. The only profound absorption is with newspapers in hand—lost to present duty, drunk with marvelous happenings that concern him not at all. He is lost in imaginings that beggar the impossible. The ideals of life that he learns are unreal, too often its maxims are unchaste. No relaxation is acceptable save that which breeds morbid excitement. No company is welcome except what tallies with the fantastical characters of fiction. Hence the itch for novelty, for change of place and of occupation. Hence the contempt for the humble home and the modest life of the family. Finally the waywardness of the girl is developed into the shamelessness of the harlot, and the restlessness of the boy into the thievish practices of the criminal.

My brethren, there is no science without books, no art, no inspiration of any kind. As our religion is a science of truth, an art of the ways of living, an inspiration of heavenly hopes, it follows that its literature is, practically speaking, essential to its influence. Its books inspire devout thought, deepen it, flavor it with the fragrance of the flowers of Paradise. Or try another illustration. Our Redeemer says of a good life that its "seed is the Word of God" (Luke viii. 11). So our souls are the soil, eternal truth ploughs them up with holy inspirations of His grace, harrows them with the visitations of His providence, and then, the soil being well prepared, He scatters good thoughts broadcast, and fruitful purposes, and elevating influences of all kinds—He does it by good words spoken and by good words written in books. An habitual use of spiritual books is an uninterrupted sowing and reaping of the heavenly harvest. On the other hand, the frivolous reading of light books, and the infatuated devotion to newspapers, is conclusive evidence of an idle spirit, of which we may say with Solomon: "I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man: and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down" (Prov. xxiv. 30, 31).

Spiritual reading is a cure-all of distractions. It gives you a companion in your prayers, namely, the great soul that wrote the words you read. It favors that passive, receptive tone of mind so needful for the enjoyment of God's familiar company. St. Teresa tells us that often only to pick up a good book would set her to praying by the very memory of its soothing or its awakening contents, just as the sight of a beloved friend brings the recollection of his words to your soul before he gets within hearing of your ears. Have you not noticed that the touch of velvet cloth in the dark suggests its soft colors by daylight? There is a magnetism in a familiar book telling of God and His saints, which instills its pious influences into the soul even before the eye has scanned its pages.

II. Submission to God's Will.

"Be ye humbled under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation: casting all your care upon Him, for He hath a care of you" (1 Peter v. 6, 7).

These words of the prince of the Apostles, my brethren, so strong and so insistent, teach Christians abandonment to God's care. They, however, offer no premium on laggard indifference to duty; but they urge constant mindfulness of the loving providence of our heavenly Father, and realization that "to them who love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. viii. 28). This produces a restful state of mind and a devout one, even amid adversities. Is there any other way of being sure of inner tranquillity? "I beg," wrote St. Francis de Sales to a friend in trouble, "that the will of God may be your repose, and His cross your glory" (*Letters to Persons in the World,* Mackey, p. 217). After all, my brethren, God is never so well served as when He is served as He wills (to quote another saying of St. Francis, p. 259). The placid acceptance as from God of what comes and stays or comes and goes of joy or sadness. Truly that is the ideal condition; if rarely fully attained, it may always be closely approached; especially must it be worshipped as the term of Christian perfection. The following words of the Holy Ghost in ancient days hold good in our own times, if we would only retire far enough from the clatter of modern life to catch the divine accents: "The works of the Lord are perfect, and all His ways are judgments" (Deut. xxxii. 4). Our perfection, therefore—let us seek it in God's workings and restings concerning us and those who are dear to us; and for judgment and guidance let us inquire after His ways and seek to learn motives. The words we have quoted are part of the farewell address of Moses to Israel. To him, glorious and majestic leader of God's chosen people, the daily happenings of the eventful forty years journey in the wilderness, were as sacred even as the revelations of Mount Sinai. So should it be with every one of us. Not less carefully than He led Israel through the desert does God lead forward the littlest among us, children of His very heart as we are, and brothers and sisters of His divine Son. The men who are with me, the tasks that are allotted me, the success that is granted me or refused me, all these are the ways and works of One Who has an infinitely wise and loving care of me. "To accept from God's hand pleasure and pain with perfect humility," teaches Albertus Magnus, "recognizing both as gifts of Providence, is of more value for the salvation of our soul, than to break a wagon load of birch rods on our shoulders every day"—unless (we may add) the birch rods are in some plain way chosen by this same Providence as part of His dispensation.

We look for miracles, and sometimes not vainly. We are properly amazed and instructed by the marvels of God's power and love in the history of the saints, wonderful things wrought outside the common course of existence. But the miracle of God's ordinary rule over men and natives and the inanimate universe—do we appreciate how much greater a miracle this is? yea, the greatest of all. Is not the constancy of the rule of supreme power and wisdom and love over all things more admirable than the few exceptions which startle us? The saints always thought so, especially in regard to themselves. One of them (though as yet uncanonized) thus summarizes the practical application of the lessons of our text. We quote a saying of the venerable Vincentian Father de Andreis, whose heroic virtues lit up the early days of the Church in America: "After all, I can draw but one conclusion: all the lights and inspirations which I have received, and the trials which I have experienced admirably terminate in this: that I should always and in everything abandon myself with sincere, total, and filial tenderness into the hands of my good God, my Father, my loving Spouse, my Life, my All; and that I should be guided as He chooses, and as it seems best to Him, without seeking to know what is to be the future, or when, or how it is to be; without asking why this, or why that, according as the Lord hath cautioned us (Luke xii. 25): 'Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?'" (*Life*, ch. x.)

Plainly, the saints were not so foolish as to endeavor to improve upon God's plan; once His providence was manifest they accepted it, and set forth to fulfill its requirements. Nor were they nervous about consequences. The glorious patriarch of Father de Andreis, St. Vincent de Paul, had a saying to this effect: "It is unwise to make a hobby horse of our own and call it divine Providence." That same St. Vincent, if we read his life in his achievements for charity and for virtue, would seem to have lived a score of lives at the same time. And yet as a matter of fact he was the quietest man as well as the greatest saint in Europe, for he gave nine parts to patience in waiting for God's will to become manifest, and then one part to active coöperation with it, which was amply sufficient to secure the best results.

My brethren, be assured that one of the foremost of our spiritual difficulties is longing after the impossible. And one of the best guarantees of our spiritual progress consists in casting all our care upon God, waiting for His signal of obedience to outward authority or to inward inspirations of charity or of zeal, and then going onward with fearless confidence.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. The Catholic Citizen.

"Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

My brethren, if we would understand this teaching of our Lord to the Jewish people, we must know that Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, was their ruler in civil affairs, and therefore was entitled to their secular obedience. In religious matters, however, they were ruled by the law of God given them through Moses. Between these two loyalties there was no small conflict in the minds of the Jews. But our Savior bade them give tribute to Cæsar as their secular ruler, and to obey God in religious matters. In fact obedience to Cæsar was, indirectly, obedience to God, as St. Paul later on taught the new Christians of Rome: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). This explains our Lord's toleration of Cæsar's claims upon the people of Israel. In obeying the Roman law they were obeying God's providence. In matters religious, however, Israel owed a higher and holier loyalty to God's will, as expressed in the law of Moses. But Christ carefully abstained from anything that would indicate He was other than a thoroughly loyal Israelite. He was King of Israel by every right human and divine. Yet would He refuse to be their earthly monarch, for when they would force a crown upon Him, "He fled away into the mountain" (John vi. 15). On the other hand, He did not come among men as a citizen of the world, but as its Savior. In His own day He rarely passed the borders of the twelve tribes, being, as he affirmed, "not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24). And He so restricted the activity of His disciples, saying: "Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles" (Matt. x. 5). But this was only during His sojourn upon earth—a tribute of special love for His own people. For when departing to heaven, He said: "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). Hence Christ's Vicar on earth, the Roman Pontiff, is at home in every nation, and the truest friend of all lawful authority, yet subject to none.

With all this in view, we understand what our Lord means by "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." He would have us withhold our deeper loyalty, that concerning religion, from any purely secular power; but He would require us to pay to our nation a heartfelt allegiance in all secular matters. And this is due by divine right not only to our vast republic, but also to our particular state and city. The comfort of it is that when we thus pay our debt to Cæsar, we pay part of our debt to God. For God is back of every creditor whose debt is a just one.

The virtues of the citizen are principally the native virtues of humanity, such as truthfulness, courage, honesty. How well should these safeguard us from the baseness of taking money for our vote, or bargaining to give it for a job of work for ourselves or our friends! As long ago as the time of the patriarch Job, the Holy Ghost threatened: "Fire shall devour their tabernacles, who love to take bribes" (Job xv. 34). It requires courage to fight your party, but it must be done now and then, or conscience will fight you. Even one's dearest friend, nay even a close relative, sometimes must be set-off and reproved and politically separated from, because he has joined the oppressors of the poor, or has leagued himself with the liquor dealers. After the Spanish war was over, it was said that our battles were won not so much by admirals and generals as by "the man behind the gun." Often our town can be saved from shame and ruin not so much by the man in high station as by the simple citizen behind the ballot. Not seldom the battle is between the man behind the saloon counter and the man behind the little child's cradle. Little do some of us realize that every Catholic who is a bad citizen is for that reason a bad Catholic.

We have said that the virtues of the citizen are principally natural ones, inherent in manhood. But the faith of Christ creates a new manhood with us, "a new creature" (Gal. vi. 15) says St. Paul. The grace of the sacraments is both a clear self-revelation of our weakness, and it is the imparting of a more than natural force to our character. The Apostle's ideal, man the "new creature," is one developed by God "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ"

(Eph. iv. 13). The civil state has a right to have such men as citizens, and the Church ratifies that claim, saying to each of us: Be a man; be free and worthy of freedom; be independent of the sway of any one except he stand for God by unquestioned right; be not a slave to any political party or leader; vote no ticket without knowledge of the policies advocated, and without scrutiny of the fitness of the candidate; think for yourself, or if you need counsel, seek it from men of good lives and disinterested motives; vote finally on your own convictions; speak your mind fearlessly; work as well as vote for a good cause, in whose interests be generous of your money, of your time; be public spirited.

St. Augustine causes our Redeemer to speak these words to souls who long to possess Him: "I am the food of the full-grown; become a man, and thou shalt feed on Me" (*Confessions,* VII., 10). Hereby does religion sanctify citizenship: Christ gives the state its truest lovers and its most valiant defenders. The more closely one is joined to our Lord, the more deeply does he love what is good in his nation, the more ardently does he strive to advance it, the more kindly a friend is he, the more independent a voter. This country's government rests upon belief in man's capability for self-government, and that demands a citizenship clean of avarice and immune of cowardice—truthful, honest, generous, courageous, and just. St. Paul's heartening words to the Corinthians apply first indeed to the needful qualities of the Christian; but their additional meaning is squarely applicable to the qualities of the citizen: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened" (1 Cor. xvi. 13).

The Gospel does not supplant patriotism; nor is it made little of by Christ's Church. Every virtue of the citizen is intensified by true religion. His motives are elevated; his vision cleared, his purposes spiritualized. Render to your fellow-citizens the things that are theirs. That is surely a noble sentiment. It is secondary only to "Render to God the things that are God's"—secondary; not crowded out of existence. Citizenship not belittled into so mean a place as one that is shut off from the divine helps of religion. Some there are who would misconceive St. Peter's teaching, that we should act in this world as "strangers and pilgrims." He refers to the vice of worldliness, and especially to "carnal desires" (1 Peter ii. 11); for in the same chapter he proclaims us to be "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may declare His virtues, Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

In the very same spirit as that first Vicar of Christ did his successor, Leo XIII., exhort the Catholic citizens of every country in the world to fulfill their duty as voters. At the turn of the century he proclaimed a Jubilee, and he declared that his object in doing so was not merely the spiritual welfare of Catholics as individuals, "but for the universal well being of the Christian commonwealth." Listen to what he said of the need of good citizenship:

"A state is what the lives of the people make it."

"Unless the individual citizens lead good lives, the State cannot keep in the path of virtue and avoid offending."

"Civil government, and those things which constitute the public life of a country, come into existence and perish by the act of men; and men almost always succeed in stamping the image of their opinions and their lives upon their public institutions."

"An attempt must be made to bring them to think and act like Christians, not less in public than in private."

"Of those whose principles are sound, there are many who through a misplaced timidity are frightened, and have not the courage even to speak out their opinions boldly, far less to translate them into deeds."

How true a sound is this, attuned to the powerful melody of Christ's teaching everywhere, and to that of the Roman pontiffs, His supreme representatives, from the beginning. Brethren, there is no coward so mean as a pious coward. There is no such sham in the wide world as the man that goes to Communion and is all the same addicted to venal politics: gathers and organizes voters for the lucrative places he can distribute among them; acquires a fortune by the favors of men or corporations whom he serves by his "influence" and his intrigues. Over and over again we find men who are total abstainers and yet the sworn and salaried defenders of saloons; men who give largely in charity and are notoriously the sponsors for predatory and monopolistic capitalists: and all because they can command votes by party loyalty or the distribution of favors. Be you, my brethren, wholly above so degrading, so slavish a political condition as to be a follower of such a leader. Let it never be said of you: His vote belongs to such and such an organization; or this: He votes as this or that leader bids him. In the name of God give your fellow-citizens an unbought vote; be a freeman if you would be worthy of the franchise of a free country.

The Catholic who undertakes to be a good citizen outside of the sway of his conscience:—why, my brethren, it is not God but his pocket, not the nation but his party or his "boss" that rules that man. This is like King Solomon's silly woman: "A golden ring in a sinner's snout, a woman fair and foolish" (Prov. xi. 22). A citizen adorned with the robes of heavenly heirship as a Catholic, and fast bound by slavish fetters as a political helot. The golden vesture of religion upon a man whose swinish nature has not been cleansed from its meanness and avarice: the annual Communion and the perpetual huckstering of votes joined together. What is the dominant trait of a naturally good man? Sincerity. He is true to himself; at the alarm of conscience he awakes and obeys. He is faithful to his convictions and fearless in upholding them. What is the dominant trait of the venal voter? Trickiness. He is a liar in his deepest consciousness. He awakes at the voice of conscience, and he forthwith smothers it. He is true to his pocket. He is expert in coining ballots into dollars. And if such a one be a Catholic, he uses that sacred name and its associations for foul purposes.

There is another class of Catholics whose piety is tainted with incivicism. We might almost say that they are against all governments, anarchists by devotional instinct. We meet with some who tell us that they never vote—and they boast of it as if it were a virtue. Many others are not so stupidly bad as this; yet they never help the common morality of their town, turning over to miserable politicians and to ministers of Protestant churches the labor and the honor of fighting public vice, saloons, foul play houses, gambling houses, bribery, and brothel keeping. They tell you that Catholics as such do not meddle with these things because their Church keeps out of politics. They esteem it a virtue never to have given money, time, voice, or name to aid the larger and sounder portion of the people in disinfecting the community of crime and its incentives. Meanwhile we know that the truest mainstay and defence of any country must be those who worship at the Catholic altar. When Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, would overrun and conquer part of free and independent Switzerland, an army of Switzers marched out to withstand him—all of them Catholics, for this was in the fifteenth century. Early in the morning he sent spies to the Switzers' camp, and these soon returned, saying that their whole army were gathered about their parish priests hearing Mass and receiving Communion. He no doubt smiled scornfully, but when the battle was joined, his forces were driven and swept away by those citizens, who knew how to love their country for the love of God.

The misfortune of it is, that when "undesirable" voters happen to be Catholics, they cast shame upon the true religion. Consider that the faith of Christ must win America mainly by the edifying lives of good Catholics, and these are many. But many nominal Catholics are drunkards and drunkard makers, gamblers and gambling-house keepers, corrupters of public officials, and thoroughgoing spoilsmen. The scandal of this condition is a hindrance to the progress of the Church. She is amply competent to convert any nation; but perfect as the organization is, many of its members in this country are incapable of any good influence. A brickmaking machine may be good, the very best; but it cannot make brick out of street mud. The test by which the true religion will be tried among this people is not divine faith or hope or love, mainly, at least, though love of the poor will rank well as an argument. The test will be the natural man; his truthfulness, honesty, courage, generosity to enemies, and loyalty to friends, temperance, purity of motives in political and civic relations. The supernatural claim must be introduced and must be sponsored by natural virtue. The Catholic Church must make good citizens of its members, or it shall not make members of our non-Catholic Americans.

We owe a manly, candid, honest citizenship to our country. If the true religion does not bring out my manhood, there is something wrong with my practice of it. A sneak, a coward, a slave of a political "boss" is no product of Catholicity. All that is meant to any American by intelligence and liberty and bravery should shine resplendent in the life of an American Catholic.

We know too well that there are masters and drivers of voters not a few among us. Such a one marshals his voters in the morning of election day, and in the evening he divides the spoils of office. Some of these vote-brokers bear the name of Christ's religion, and many of their bought and sold adherents are also nominal Catholics. But, thanks be to God, many others, genuine Catholics, are the reverse. They are not fanatical for the rights of the toiler, but none the less they are his unpurchasable friend. In the ceaseless conflict between vice and virtue, they stand openly for God, these consistently Catholic citizens; and whether their influence be great or little, it is ever wielded upon the right side of social controversies; and in all others of a more debatable kind, it is given honestly after deliberation and counsel.

II. Misgivings About Death.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46).

Consider the lessons of autumn, my brethren, for they tell of death. Nor need these warnings of decaying nature, now seen all around us, be wholly sad, for the greatest act of confidence in God that we shall ever offer is reserved for the point of death. Calmly to resign oneself into the hands of infinite justice! surely it is a priceless tribute to the infinite love of God, which is the motive of all our good deeds and the force of all His dealings with us, whether for His rights or for our welfare.

Although we cannot help trembling at the thought of crossing that outermost boundary line of all probation which we call death, yet we know Whom we have trusted "against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12)—that day of Christ's happiest meeting with His friends. The supremest will of our Savior is salvation. The distinctive virtues of a Christian must therefore be various forms of confidence in making a happy departure from this life. We believe that the two virtues most appropriate to a dying friend of God are trust in His mercy and thanksgiving for His graces and favors during life—very great virtues, my brethren, and sometimes not easy to practise. But the more we know of how Catholics die, the easier it seems to us to make acts of thanksgiving and of confidence during the last moments.

Hence the devout custom of placing in the hands of the dying man a crucifix, and of speaking to him of the death of Jesus; and also of having him repeat His last words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." O God, grant us all to have the Spirit of Christ in our hearts, and His last words on our lips in our death agony. As to the virtue of thanksgiving, why, my brethren, what time is so appropriate for giving thanks as the moment when the last favors of all are being granted—the graces of the last confession and communion, and especially those of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. By all this it is made plain that the steadfastness of our hope then, is rooted in our fervent dispositions now. If I can but this instant protest to my soul's Redeemer my love for Him as an answer to the menace of death, then I am safe. I love Thee, I love Thee, O Jesus Crucified, and most sincerely do I now utter mighty words of fealty to Thee in Thy death. Nor, O my Savior, shall I be quite overwhelmed with misgivings about my last hour, for how can this my heartfelt love of Thee suddenly vanish away at my departure and give place to the hatred of the damned? I love Thee now, and I will love Thee at the end, and I will love Thee forever.

Such sentiments—and are they not the habitual feelings of all true Christians?—extract the sting of bitterness from the thought of death. No doubt we must be distressed that our direst trial of body and of soul is yet to come, and forebodings rise unbidden in our mind. On the other hand, may we not reasonably wish that it soon might come, and for the very same reason, namely, that the fearful ordeal were better to be soon over and done? Who starting upon a weary journey does not wish he were, here and now, to confront the most perilous part of the road, so that misgivings might be put an end to; for it is distrust and foreboding that strain our endurance more than the actual stress of the conflict.

"As for me, I am, by the mercy of God, approaching my end, and every hour that I am kept waiting is like a thousand years." There are the words of St. Felix of Cantalice a short while before his death. They recall to mind our Savior's own feelings when He looked towards the end. How often did He not speak of His death to His disciples, and always with a divine courage. When He was glorified before them at the Transfiguration, and was waited on by Moses and Elias, He and they spoke together "of the decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 31). May Jesus grant us all such calmness and such sweetness in the forecast of death, even as He granted it to His servant, St. Teresa, whose renowned Canticle to Death is the perfect expression of a saint's longing for eternity, one verse of which we recommend to your meditation:

> "Ah what a length does life appear!
> How hard to bear this exile here!
> How hard from weary day to day
> To pine without relief!
> The yearning hope to break away
> From this my prison house of clay,
> Inspires so sharp a grief
> That evermore I weep and sigh,
> Dying because I do not die."

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. Despondency.

"For she said within herself: If I shall touch only His garment I shall be healed."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

Our Redeemer rewarded this woman's trust in Him by an immediate cure: "Be of good heart, daughter; thy faith hath made thee whole." Faith in God's truthfulness is our cure of doubts and misgivings about the mysteries of His revelation. Faith in His power to cure all our ills, and in His willingness to do so, is faith indeed, but also the virtue of hope. This woman who for twelve years had been sadly afflicted with a disease offensive, both to herself and to her friends, had this latter kind of faith in our Redeemer, it was a faithful hope and a hopeful faith. St. Luke's account gives several additional features of this instructive event (Luke viii. 43-48); read it, my brethren, for all details of our Savior's bounty to the afflicted serve to increase our loving confidence that He will be equally good to us when our turn to suffer shall come.

This daughter of Israel, in the dozen years of her hard trial, must constantly have heeded the counsel of her people's prophet: "Seek ye the Lord and be strengthened; seek ye His face evermore" (Ps. civ. 4). But as often as she prayed, His face was turned away. Now, however, she will valiantly venture upon another effort. Therefore, going behind our Lord's back to get strength from Him, she is jostled by the thronging crowd, content to touch the hem of His garment; and instantly the strength of God is granted her. The act and the prayer were the better for her meekness. But their innermost life was her confidence in Christ's love. How admirable a trait is mutual confidence between friends—the native tendency which is the bud of the supernatural flower of hope. The buoyant nature, not easily discouraged, whose sympathetic tears even are lit up by a bright smile of encouragement—God has so made us that we love such a friend fondly. Any man who is not easily downcast is a living comfort. Men are built that way—with much or little of this juicy food of fortitude; and Christians are endowed that way—with much or little of supernatural trustfulness in God's immortal purpose to save. But everyone has enough of that grace, so sweet, so elevating, to serve him adequately for overcoming despondency. The hopeful man gets joy out of anything; at his touch the very clay of the earth, if he is fated to delve in it, turns into golden thoughts of better things. Blessed the spirit over which adversity cannot play the tyrant. Blessed the Christian who feels that if the Lord passes him by unnoticed, He does so only to fully strengthen him—in due time—by the mere touch of the hem of His garment. This is true amid the very direst adversity, even whilst the soul is positively writhing beneath the strokes of a tormenting Providence—such as incurable illness, death of idolized relatives, poverty as sudden as it is utter. Then does one hold his own with God if he can but murmur amid his sobs the promise of the Lord to his heart-broken prophet: "I will kill and I will make to live; I will strike, and I will heal" (Deut. xxxii. 39). Yet this much is to be regretted—that no scandal is more notorious than the timidity of good men.

How lofty is that calm virtue, when even amid the shocks and tremblings of the blow that fells us we are resigned. Even the rush of the waters that have overwhelmed me cannot down the voice of my hope. "Save me, O God! for the waters have come even into my soul" (Ps. lxviii. 2). Soon after that the stream of suffering becomes placid. Though bitter to the taste, these floods are cleansing to the thoughts and affections, and we can in entire resignation use the prophet's words: "In peace, in the selfsame I will sleep, and I will rest" (Ps. iv. 9). Soon comes to us the same glad word of the Comforter to the woman: "Somebody hath touched Me, for I know that virtue hath gone out of Me" (Luke viii. 46). St. Catherine of Genoa was sadly buffeted by adversity of many kinds. But she chose as her prime virtue confidence in God's goodness, and for her motto that petition of the Our Father which would have God rule our hearts as He rules over His angels: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Her immense charities to the poor were exceedingly painful; her married life was miserable in the extreme; her desolation of spirit was modeled on Christ's dereliction on the cross. And yet the sovereign goodness of God was ever enthroned in her life. She felt as an instinct the Psalmist's praise of God: "He hath satisfied the empty soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with good things. Such as sat in darkness and in the shadow of death; bound in want and in iron" (Ps. cvi. 9, 10). It is the union of love with hope, this trustfulness in God, and it plays its best healing part when our malady is the leprosy of mortal sin, and we are longing to be cleansed of it. How love acts on hope in a sinner's mind is this way: when I say to my Redeemer, "O my Lord Jesus Christ, I long to love Thee," I know that I can so speak to Him only because He has first loved me (1 John iv. 19). Therein is my hope. Unconsciously to myself He has been wooing me back to Him; and He has at last won me to beg Him to love me. Shall He cool in His love? He Who in the midst of the opened heavens "was called faithful and true" (Apoc. xix. 11).

A very high virtue is this of the timid yet confiding woman of this day's Gospel, a grade of faith which borrows heavily from hope, as we have seen, whilst trustful love binds them both to itself. The gift of the Holy Ghost which shines upon it is that of fortitude, by the help of which this woman stood her ground and overcame her fears. The fruits of the Holy Ghost which she gathered in richest abundance are joy and peace. The Beatitudes which lifted her above herself into a region of blessedness peculiar to trustful souls are, "Blessed are the meek," and "Blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. v. 4, 5). These shall be comforted, and shall be blessed with such glorious words from God as: "Be of good heart!" The contrary vices—and truly devilish ones they are—are despair of God's goodness, and presuming upon it as a security against the punishment of sin. Let us pray, my brethren, against even the shadow of despair, saying to God with the prophet: "Be not Thou a terror unto me; Thou art my hope in the day of affliction" (Jer. xvii. 17). Among the Saints of the Desert there was one quite remarkable even in that silent company, for his tendency to solitary prayer. When Simon the Meditative, as he was called, was asked his favorite ejaculation, he said it was this address to God: "O Lord, Thou art the God of the penitent and the Savior of sinners!"

The evil one manifests his presence by breeding dissensions among brethren and friends; also by fostering pride and its kindred vice, disobedience. But as there is no being in existence whose gloom is drearier than Satan's, so may his foul presence be known from the sadness following his temptations. Honest Christians he misleads by weariness in well doing; sinful ones he hinders from repentance by setting them to brood upon the dullness of a virtuous life. "The prince of darkness," says St. Francis de Sales, "is pleased with sadness and melancholy because he is and will continue to be sad and melancholy to all eternity; therefore he desires that everyone should be like himself" (*Devout Life,* Pt. IV., ch. xii.). What can stupify a clear-minded man more than the mental drug of despondency? He is—to use another comparison—like a man whose work is laborious and whose appetite for food is gone. The sweetness of virtue is gone; the difficulties of fidelity to God's law are enormously exaggerated; even the humors of the body are disordered; the charm of pleasant companionship is changed into bitterness. It is to persons in such a state that the Apostle St. James gives advice: "Is any of you sad, let him pray" (James v. 13).

A tendency to sadness is the bane of zeal. When a work of God which is plainly good is hindered, too often those who have it in charge sit down and fold their hands in sorrow. Little do they realize that first attempts are allowed to fail for the divinest purposes, such as starting over again better prepared, waiting for a more opportune moment, being joined by wise helpers; and especially in order to saturate the soul with confidence in God, Who requires good reasons for saying to His servants: "Because he hath hoped in Me I will deliver him; I will protect him because he hath known My name" (Ps. xc. 14). When St. Augustine of Canterbury was sent to convert the English, he heard such dreadful things about them on the way that he became disheartened, and from his half-completed journey he returned to St. Gregory the Great who had sent him forth: the mighty mission was a failure before it had begun. Not so to Gregory, who but insisted the more vehemently upon Augustine and his monks putting through their holy undertaking, looking upon this first failure as an additional cause to hope for final success. Hardly any good work of note is finally well done except after a period spent in failure and in blundering. As to the best form of prayer, spiritual writers counsel pious ejaculations as a relief to this moody condition, the utterance aloud of the holy names of Jesus and Mary, the making of the sign of the cross, reciting short and cheerful passages of Holy Scripture. And the woman healed in this day's Gospel gives us an excellent little phrase of hope and faith: "If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed."

Some there are whose sadness is temperamental, and these may become very holy by fortitude under such a trial. Breeding as it often does a cloud of scruples, bravely to struggle against it gradually fortifies the mind and disciplines it to an exact obedience to God as represented by one's Father confessor—who, we say in passing, should be chosen for his easy and cheerful as well as patient nature. Again, temperamental sadness is relieved by a choice of recreations, by plenty of bodily exercise, especially out of doors, by fondness for children's company. Perhaps the best palliative for inborn melancholy (for a cure total and final can hardly come before death) is an incessantly repeated act of resignation to the divine will, bearing in mind that none shall so perfectly rejoice in heaven as those who have constantly mourned upon earth.

II. Consoling Thoughts About Death.

"Whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. xiv. 8).

My brethren, nothing better serves our purpose to live well than meditation on the means necessary for dying well; and just the same do we learn how to die well by plainly realizing the conditions necessary for living well. Even to a good Christian death is repellant; nay, the saints themselves had their moments of terror at the thought of that dread exchange of time for eternity. "Do Thou, O Lord," exclaimed St. Teresa, "bestow Thy love upon me. Suffer me not to depart from this life until nothing which it contains gives me any care, and not before I have learned to love Thee alone" (*Way of Perfection,* Stanbrook, ch. xli., 1). But if this uneasiness be not absent from saints, and if it be an acute feeling of dread in ordinary Christians, we should know from that very fact that our Savior constantly feels sympathy for us. Thinking as He did incessantly of His own death (Luke xii. 50), He cannot do otherwise with regard to ours, for His death was for our sakes. Jesus is called by the Holy Ghost the Amen of life: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Apoc. iii. 14). He hath appointed Himself the final witness of our last battle with evil, and He purposes to be the Amen of our victory—"faithful and true" to the end. What we have to do is so to behave as to be ready for His coming. What does that mean? Plainly this: to so act as to be able to say to Him any hour of any day: "Lord, Thou Judge of the living and the dead, I am ready to die; I have accused myself, I have judged myself, I have condemned myself, I have punished myself—all as far as I know how, and as far as I was able, and by means of Thy Church and Thy sacraments. All this I have done for Thy sake, and in anticipation of entering Thy awful court at the moment of my death." In that spirit and with such preparations, may we not confidently wait for the end? Shall we not trust that He Who hath begun and wrought in us so good a work of preparation shall perfect it unto that day of reckoning? (Phil. i. 6.) Well may we hope that our good angel shall hail the final approach of Him, Who having chosen to be our Redeemer, now advances as our Advocate to lead us into the divine court. Well may we look forward with joy, for He will come as our Savior. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy King will come to thee, the just and savior" (Zach. ix. 9).

These truths, my brethren, give us reason upon reason for studying constantly the lessons of death upon Calvary. You may have assisted at the deathbed of a fervent Christian, and you have surely found that you helped him best by offering him a crucifix, and by reading to him the Passion of Christ. Notice, too, that the priest, whilst he is administering the last sacraments, often shows the dying man the plaintive figure of His dying Redeemer. The sacraments themselves, are they not the cleansing of the soul in the precious life blood of Jesus—especially so in confession and absolution? Do we not receive the glorified Body of Jesus crucified and risen again in Holy Communion? The Lord's final pardon from the cross, do we not receive it in Extreme Unction? I know Jesus is my Friend, because for love of me He came down from heaven and made Himself my equal; and though He is the Only-begotten of the Father, He yet shared with me all that He has, all that He is; shall He not be a friend faithful unto death? He is my Teacher; shall He not impart to me that dearest wisdom of life, the way to end life happily?—how to act and speak and think and suffer and pray in my last agony? Jesus is my Ransom; He took my place on the gallows of Calvary; He exchanged His life for mine; shall He make forfeit of so dear an exchange at the very last hour of my earthly existence? He is my soul's food and drink, saying to me that if I ate and drank His flesh and blood He would give me "everlasting life" (John vi. 55); and this promise, so worthy of the Lord of life and death, shall He not make it good, now that my departure into eternity is at hand? And, as already mentioned, Jesus is my Advocate (1 John ii. 1), an office which assembles all His other offices in one, and energizes them in the court of infinite Justice for my salvation; surely my cause is safe in the hands of such an Advocate.

Finally, my brethren, let us pray our Lord, that when He comes to our deathbed, He may summon there as His holy company the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, with St. Joseph, His foster-father, who died happily in His arms. May Jesus, Mary, and Joseph be the company about us, together with our dear guardian angel, when our hour of departure shall be announced.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

I. God's Judgment of Sinners.

"Then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been seen from the beginning of the world until now."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

These words of our Redeemer, my brethren, are part of His prophecy of the last and general judgment of mankind, an event of which He spoke in much detail and with terrible earnestness of warning. Before considering that day of doom, let us meditate upon the particular judgment, that which each of us separately must undergo the moment after death. Yes, everyone of us, be he saint or sinner, must meet Jesus Christ face to face and alone on the threshold of eternity. Surely the fright of a man who has died at enmity with God will be simply awful, confronted, as he shall be, with his all-powerful Judge, his future destiny to be now forever settled.

But note the difference between the fright of a sinner now and after death. For now his fright is a boon from heaven, for it is mingled with a feeling of reverence towards God. Even while he agonizes at the turpitude of his wickedness, he cherishes hope, and forms good resolutions to confess his sins and to bear the shame of penance, and so be saved. But how different after death, after impenitence has been too long delayed. Aversion from God becomes the final and perpetual state of that soul. He would wish to escape the doom now impending, but he is not in the least influenced by reverence for Christ or by real regret for his sins. As in life the virtues of Christ's Gospel awakened only the sinner's smile of derision, so now the sight of Christ Himself but tempts and stings him to defiance: "They were separated," so speaks the Holy Ghost about such beings, "and repented not; they tempted Me, they scoffed at Me with scorn; they gnashed upon Me with their teeth" (Ps. xxxiv. 16).

But what shall I say to Jesus as I behold Him clothed in divine majesty, barring my soul from the door of heaven, armed with His cross which I have despised? Brethren, you know that the earth seems to be a flat surface, and we travel over it straight away, as if always receding farther from our point of departure. But in reality we are always traveling round a globe, and if we will but go on long enough, we shall come back at last to our place of starting, and begin the same journey over again. So does life seem a straight journey, and every day seems to leave our past life farther distant behind us. But we are moving and living in a circle. When death comes, and the whole road has been traversed, we shall have reached the point of our original departure—and there we meet Jesus Christ. Then we go over the journey of life again with Him, examining every step, every act, even an idle word. We are met at death by God, our whole career is considered and judged by Him; and eternity depends on His final decree. The holy man Job forecasting this divine accounting, cries out to God: "Thou considerest the footsteps of my feet" (Job xiii. 27).

It is related in the life of St. Bernard, that once he entered a church in Germany, after having worked many miracles in the vicinity. The spots in the church's pavement which his feet touched were carefully noted, and after he had gone away, each footprint was marked with a plate of bronze, in holy memory of the man of God. Sinner, thou art a man of Satan, and thy goings and comings are full of wickedness. Thy footprints are marked with the fire of hell all through thy life. Darest thou now go over them in memory? What wilt thou do when God shall force thee to retrace thy steps and shall say to thee: Dost thou remember this place, the deed that here was done, the words here said by thee, the shame that in this place thou broughtest upon thy victim? Sometimes we hear it said: O if I had my life to live over again! Brethren, everyone of us shall live his life over again. It shall be in company with Jesus Christ, and at the beginning of eternity. Once at a trial for murder, the prosecuting lawyer handed the prisoner a letter written to the murdered man threatening him with death; and he asked: "Is that your handwriting?" The guilty wretch looked at it, turned white, and fainted away. He recognized his handwriting—he had written down his own guilt. So do we write down our own guilt on the immortal tablets of memory, to be confronted with them when arraigned in the court of Jesus Christ.

This judgment shall be about everything. We may be spiritual spendthrifts, and forget who gave us our souls and our bodies and our life; the worth of our graces; the gravity of our responsibilities. We may ignore the divinity of God's commandments and sacraments, which we now so lightly put aside. We may even ridicule God's holiness as displayed in the lives of our devout friends. But the day comes when we shall each one of us account for all and every portion of these treasures thus lightly squandered, account to One Who warns us that even for our every idle word we shall be held responsible (Matt. xii. 36)—an idle word, a wasted penny, a silly thought. O my brethren, if this be true, what shall we do when He demands from us an account of the blood He shed for us, of the Catholic faith and the holy sacraments He bestowed upon us, of the virtue of chastity, and that of temperance, of our own very souls, and those of our children? Let the sinner consider the uncounted number of his sins; the many long years during which he has insulted God and profaned his own immortal soul; and then let him remember that there is not one hour of that time, spent so criminally but an angel of God has witnessed its every happening, not one of his evil deeds but He will charge against him before the Ruler of the universe. "What shall I do," exclaims the holy man Job, "when God shall arise to judge; and when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him?" (Job xxxi. 14.)

Every action of ours casts a shadow in the endless vistas of eternity; every word is echoed in the ceaseless ages; every prayer of ours thrills in the heart of the eternal God; every mortal sin of ours is acclaimed with the welcome of hell. And all this maze of evidence, and myriad of portent, is concentrated together for the divine inspection the first hour after death. It is this thought that has driven many a wicked man to instant repentance, and held him fast and firm unto perseverance. Shall it have no effect upon us?

And now let us hasten to the last judgment. Suppose, my brethren, that this day the graves of some family lot in the cemetery should suddenly give up their dead, parents and children and other near relatives, all rising together and standing face to face. Some are shining with heaven's glory, others are dark and fiendish. Behold little innocent babes mingling with blaspheming sinners. Extend this woeful spectacle to the whole surface of the globe, and you will have some idea of the first part of the day of judgment.

Scripture thus speaks of a wicked king of Israel: "Jeroboam, the son of Nabat, who caused Israel to sin and showed Ephraim the way of sin" (Ecclus. xlvii. 29). So are some men and women kings and generalissimos among sinners. Their victims will claim them that day. One will cry out: "I am indeed guilty, but my very mother shares my guilt, for she neglected me and set me a bad example, and I will tear her heart out." Another will say: "If I can find the saloon keeper that sold me drink, I will make him drink fire." A wicked father exclaims: "You ungrateful, unnatural son! I curse you and the mother that bore you. You both tormented me, you robbed me, you ruined my soul by your wickedness." The son answers: "Your curses on your own head, you demon of a father; I learned damnation from your bad example." And mother and daughter, and husband and wife, will mutually reproach and curse each other. O sinners, listen to these sounds; consider the furious hearts that utter these words of hate and revenge. Some of the wicked would almost be willing to suffer all the other rigors of the judgment, if they could but avoid meeting the men and women for whose downfall they are responsible.

We meet with men who resent being invited to holy Mass, which is the meeting place of the soul with its Redeemer, for an exchange of love's tenderest greetings; they will sometimes insult you for reminding them of the hour of Sunday Mass. But what will they do when mighty angels shall drive them forward and compel them to stand forth in the ranks of the reprobate to meet the awful gaze of the living God, and to hear His sentence of eternal damnation? O why do we not bear in mind that there comes a day when we *must* obey God, and with everlasting pain as our only fate, a day very different from this present day, when we are free to disobey Him, free to despise and insult those who represent Him? Well may you take thought of that future day of woe and wrath, my brethren; well may you throw off the torpor of impenitence, and instantly prepare for your confession; for now the call of God is to pardon and peace, as the Apostle says: "Arise, thou that sleepest, and arise thee from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee" and save thee (Eph. v. 14).

And now behold the divine Judge. "God sitteth on His holy throne" (Ps. xlvi. 9). What are His royal insignia? Behold His Cross, His crown of thorns, the scourge, the nails, the lance; these are the trophies of the Conqueror of the world. But He could not conquer the souls of the reprobate. On His throne He sits, a throne adorned with those tokens of love for men, love faithful unto death. Although He is here to sit in judgment, yet does He appear full of sweetness more than of majesty. And it is in this aspect of gentleness that He is most terrible to sinners, as the remembrance of His love rejected and despised shall haunt them in eternity. Not from the wrath of the Most High only would they wish to flee, but St. John reveals that "they say to the mountains and the rocks: Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Apoc. vi. 16). It is the Lamb of God that is their worst terror. O brethren, the weight of God's judgment falls on the rejection of the Babe of Bethlehem; we shall be condemned for spurning Jesus Crucified. It is the patience of God, it is the long suffering of Jesus, that most appalls the guilty consciences of the lost

"Be still and see that I am God." Yes, at last Jesus is supreme Master and God. Peace is now God dominating over hate, meekness is now God ruling over pride; and chastity and temperance, truth and love, are triumphant over malice and lust. Pride and all vices are dumb with rage and horror. In this life it is the most unblushing pride that obtains the most abject submission; the most reckless ambition wins the highest places; avarice, imposture, calumny rule with the wickedest sway. But not forever; for now "All iniquity shall hold its mouth" (Ps. cvi. 42), and God's goodness shall triumph in majesty over the malice of His enemies.

Then the Judge exclaims: "I call My Father to witness that I waited for you long and patiently. But you constantly and most willfully rejected Me. Or if for a brief space you seemed to become My friends, you soon played Me false again. Your doom sounded a hundred times, and My Mother's prayers held back the uplifted sword of death that you might be given yet other opportunities to repent; you rejected them all. I sent you warning after warning, and you always said, 'No, I will not serve Thee.' Or you trifled and parleyed and delayed; sometimes you even ridiculed My messengers. Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire. My blood was shed in vain for you, My life was offered up in vain for you. Depart! You have yourselves alone to blame for the curse of fire and woe that is upon you now and forever."

My brethren, we have not considered the joy of God's friends at the day of judgment, postponing that blessed theme to another occasion.

II. God's Judgment of the Just.

"And He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, and from the farthest parts of the heavens to the uttermost bounds of them."—*From this Sunday's Gospel.*

The first sight that greets the eyes of the just as they assemble for the last judgment, is the blessed cross of the Son of God. Many a time while in this world the form of Jesus Crucified touched them with sympathy, and inspired them to penance for their sins; with not a few it was the last object their dying eyes gazed upon, symbol of blessed hope, token of Christ's eternal love. And now they behold it emblazoned in the sky: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens" (Matt. xxiv. 30)—the royal standard of their well-loved King. They will see His glorious form, all resplendent with majesty, which instead of affrighting them, penetrates them with a confidence and joy unspeakable.

Seated upon His throne in radiant splendor with His Apostles and His Mother and His angels encircling Him, Jesus turns to His elect and delivers their sentence of salvation. Ah, my brethren, you have heard many sweet tones of welcome and of love and of forgiveness, but that day a voice that is the fountain of all sweetness shall bid you welcome to immortal joy with accents entirely divine: "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). In this life Jesus Christ calls you to repentance, and you answer Him loyally but painfully; then He shall call you to bliss, and your very heart will respond with a thanksgiving whose fervor shall last through the eternal years. O my soul! It well behooves thee to hearken to God's voice now, sadly though it leads thee to tears and to humiliation; for those that now obey Him unto penance shall on that day obey Him unto everlasting happiness.

Our Savior will call us "blessed of His Father." My brethren, His blessing is the only blessing. The world's blessing is a curse; it is a gift of dust and ashes and the horror of the tomb. The blessing of God is perennial peace in the realms of His fatherly love, by which He "hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. i. 3). The blessed kingdom to be granted us at the end of the world was not prepared originally for the angels, but for us men who are God's prime favorites above all the celestial choirs. Consider that kindom, how long ago it was founded for us—"from the foundation of the world"—and how long it will endure. Consider that it is a heavenly kingdom, and that its joys are as pure and as perfect as God. Come to Me, says Jesus, and let us go "to My Father and your Father" (John xx. 17), Who hath been "pleased to give you a kingdom" (Luke xii. 32), which shall be your own forever. It is His kingdom and Mine and yours, so ancient and so splendid. Consider, too, with what citizens it is inhabited. For, says the Apostle, forecasting our call by the great King to His realm, "you are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the Church of the firstborn, who are written in the heavens, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect" (Heb. xii. 22, 23). O Blessed Father, what thanks can we give Thee for so sovereign a gift as Thy divine home itself, filled with the riches of Thy glory, and inhabited by Thy well-loved friends, the angels and saints. O grant us a due appreciation of it, and send Thy Holy Spirit upon us to guide us how rightly to make sure of obtaining it for our everlasting dwelling.

Blessed indeed are we, my brethren, to have this destiny reserved for us. Jesus the Judge may well proclaim our understanding blessed, for it shall enjoy the unfailing light of glory, to know God as He knows us, and to be drawn deep into the life of the Holy Trinity, now seemingly so inaccessible, now so utterly mysterious. Blessed shall we be in our memory, gladly recalling the hard fight against temptation, and the dear won victory. Blessed shall we be in our body and its senses and its members, when they shall be illuminated through and through with the Son of God's own brightness, "The body of our lowness, made like the body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 21); it shall remind us of its days of pain and weariness borne with patience for Christ's dear sake. Brethren, the practice of virtue is its own reward, and a life of self-denial ennobles one with the trophies of noble victories over passion and appetite. But what is that consciousness of human excellence compared to the dignity of immediate union of soul and body with the uncreated and infinite beatitude of God? Such shall be our happy lot when, according to our Savior's promise, we shall be lifted up above the earth, and join Him and all His heavenly company in life everlasting.

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

I. The Sanctity of Mary.

"Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come" (Cant. ii. 10).

At the end of a life of such exalted virtue, my brethren, we may well suppose that our Blessed Lady was very near to heaven's own altitude of virtue, and that the call of her Son to make haste and come to Him was to her like the first beginnings of Paradise. Into the ranks of the angels and "through fields of starry light" her soul ascended, to be crowned by Jesus with the diadem of eternal queenship over all the realm of celestial bliss. The poet thus speaks to the angelic hosts:

"A fairer flower than she
  On earth hath never been;
And, save the throne of God,
  Your heavens have never seen
A wonder half so bright
  As your ascending Queen!"
    —(Faber's *Hymn on The Assumption.*)

But if Jesus bestows upon her royalty over the angels, much more gladly does He crown her with earth's sovereign majesty. For what is the glory of being Queen of the angels compared to that of being Mother of the God-man Who is King of the angels, and Mother, too, of all His vast family of humankind? To which of the angels hath this radiant Queen said at any time: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee?" (Heb. i. 5.) To the firstborn of all manhood's race, to Jesus, Mary says those words forever, says to our Elder Brother, "Thou art my Son;" one of whose Apostles says that "We are members of His body and of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph. v. 30). Placed on high with her Son, she is mistress of earth and heaven, of men and angels; and she has room in her great heart for the love of all, but principally she is enraptured with love of us.

Consider that the coronation of Mary in heaven is the glorifying of our penance for sin. Innocent from the first moment of her existence, she was yet penitent every hour of her life; for she shared the sympathy for sinners which was the life-long sentiment of her Son's Sacred Heart. St. Paul claimed that he helped cleanse his converts from the defilement of their sins by his own sufferings, saying: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church" (Col. i. 24). Every one of us is vouchsafed the privilege of contributing some little coöperation with Christ's merits in the world's redemption; not only an Apostle, but also his humblest disciple. But foremost in this privilege is that being whose heart is clasped close to the Redeemer's own in heaven, His Mother. My brethren, no grace is so needful to you as sorrow for your sins; for none do you stand so much in need of a powerful intercessor. Pray to the Mother of the Man of Sorrows, that she may bear you in mind whilst she now celebrates her bright anniversary in heaven.

Consider her earthly investiture of penitential royalty by that ambassador of the Holy Spirit, St. Simeon. The archangel Gabriel announced to her her divine motherhood, saying that her soul was "full of grace," and that she was destined to bear a Son Who should be the Savior of mankind (Luke i. 28-35). But St. Simeon, at the presentation of the Child Jesus in the temple, revealed the blood empurpled glory of her grace of motherhood, saying: "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed" (Luke ii. 35). The same stroke of justice then smote Mary's heart that upon Calvary opened the heart of her Son, and loosed its floodgates of infinite pity. The wounds of Jesus: His will was that the sorrows of Mary should be their perfect expression. The stream of her tears was fed by the blood of her crucified Son. The tears of our contrition, can they be in anywise so acceptable to Him as when they are due to her intercession? Brethren, the pardon of your sins can in no way be better effected than by making her your confidant in your preparation for confession.

Another grace of supreme worth to us is that of final perseverance. We know not what more welcome words Mary could hear this day than our prayer for perseverance in her Son's friendship. Her own final perseverance is her very crown. Amid the chants of her ultimate victory was that diadem bestowed upon her. Whilst on earth, she ever enjoyed, indeed, the grace of completed predestination, yet she knows full well how different is our state. Never does morning dawn in our life but that its very brightness is a forecast of the dying splendors of evening. And now that Mary is in a place whose day shall never know a setting, her eager heart longs to share with us its ripened fruits of imperishable love of God—with us, who are as yet pilgrims upon the weary way. My brethren, the very perfection of Christ's mercy to us was shown when His hands placed the crown of eternal peace on the brow of His Mother, to shine upon us with the stars of hope through her intercession every moment of our life, especially at the end.

Consider the glory of Mary and the virtue of chastity. It is a timid virtue, fearful of danger, never safe unless it be watchful and even over-watchful, as one might say; and it is not secure until it is placed behind the battlements of the very citadel of holiness by a happy death. Now here is "the Mother of fair love" (Ecclus. xxiv. 24) assumed into heaven both in body and in soul. Thanks be to God for this, because the fragrance of her purity is the balm of our hope. She is not only a virgin by excellence, *the* virgin of our race, but she is acclaimed by Holy Church as the "Virgin of virgins." And she is a virgin Mother. Her purity is in this: her spouse is the Holy Ghost, her Son is the living God. And, ah, happy fortune! her clients are our own poor selves, constantly tempted against her peculiar virtue; and by her guardianship as constantly triumphant. In ancient days the ark of the covenant, containing the divine promises of Israel's salvation, was by Jehovah's command made of precious incorruptible setim wood, and both within and without was overlaid with purest gold (Exod. xxv. 11). So is God's promise of our perpetual chastity deposited in Mary's immaculate heart, adorned with purest gold of holy love; and resplendent with "preëminent sanctity both of soul and body," to quote the words of St. Ambrose.

Mary, too, is the patron of our prayers. Holy Church in her liturgy for this Feast presents as the type of the Blessed Virgin the prayerful Mary Magdalen, selecting that portion of the Gospel (Luke x. 38-42) in which our Redeemer praises her prayer rather than her sister's work, saying: "Martha, Martha, thou art solicitous, and troubled about many things. Now, one thing is necessary: Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." Thus Holy Church would call our attention to our heavenly Mother's choice of things during her life on earth, no less than to her one absorbing occupation in the life above—prayer in time and prayer in eternity. If we consider that her external works were those of a mother's vocation, and that her Son was the Word made Flesh, we may easily see that during her stay among men, whether working or resting, her soul was constantly in communication with the Deity. In this the Church would have us endeavor to imitate as well as admire her, and exhorts us to beg her prayerful intercession for the perfecting of our devotional exercises.

Mary, now glorified in heaven, longs to obtain for us a taste of that abundance of prayerful power which makes salvation secure—"that glowing fire of charity towards God, by means of which the soul is, as it were, dissolved and swallowed up in love; and throwing itself upon His bosom becomes united and absorbed in Him, speaks to Him with a divine familiarity, and entertains itself with Him as with a most affectionate parent" *(Cassian's Conferences).* Such was Mary's own prayer whilst here below. For so she describes it: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke i. 46, 47). The joy of God was made her own from the dawn of reason, but especially when God's Only-begotten was made her Son. If she could then say, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God," much right and power hath she to say now to me: "Thy spirit shall rejoice in God thy Savior, for He is my Son, and when I ask a favor for thee He will not turn away His face." Her words in the *Magnificat* were anticipated by prayerful King David: "My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall be delighted in His salvation. All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to Thee?" (Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10.) My brethren, there is a life of virtue so excellent that its ordinary morning and night prayers feel very deeply the joy of God, easily contrast heaven with earth, and are carried upward with an immense love of divine things. One's daily labor is lighted up from heaven. The sense of God's presence is so strong that amid distracting duties one's thoughts instinctively rise upward, "rather," as St. Francis de Sales teaches, "by manner of outflowing of the spirit into eternity and the eternal One, than by manner of ordinary reasoning and thinking" (*Letters to Persons in Religion,* Mackey, p. 219).

By moonlight I see to read if it be unusually bright; at least to read large print. Presently I find a sharper light mingling with the silvery rays of the moon. It is the golden brightness of the dawn of day; the sun is mingling with and finally totally supplanting the moon. So with the prayer of grace and the prayer of glory. The light of grace is at its best in our fervent moments. Occasionally into these shine rays of heaven's sunlight, and we are made aware of a clearness of perception of things religious and temporal, amazing and yet restful. My brethren, our Mother Mary now basks in the brightness of that Being Who is the "Sun of Justice" (Mal. iv. 2), the splendor of the Father's glory (Heb. i. 3), made incarnate through her womb. She is in that focus of all light which is the heart of the Son of God, for He is also her Son (Apoc. xxi. 23). And this gift of light and of fire is hers to bestow upon our prayers; perhaps she has this favor more abundantly at her disposal than any other.

O Mother of prayerful love! We are glad that thou art our Mother, for although so far from us, thou canst obtain for us the grace to have all our conversation in heaven (Phil. iii. 20). By thy intercession, cause, we beg of thee, the Holy Spirit to fill our souls with the sweetness of prayer, and our lives with the fruitfulness of good works. Amen.

II. The Humility of Mary.

"Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid" (Luke i. 48).

It was by an assemblage of all virtues into their proper meeting place, which is the virtue of the love of God, that the Blessed Virgin Mary merited to be made the Mother of her divine Son. Among these, however, humility stood foremost. God took into account her gentle self-forgetfulness when He so endowed her with the graces of the divine maternity, that from thenceforth all generations should call her blessed (Luke i. 48). She knew God too well to have anything but a low opinion of herself; Creator and creature were always over against each other in her thoughts and prayers. When the angel said to her: "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women" (Luke i. 28), the evangelist tells us that "she was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this might be." Brethren, God loved this stainless maiden, and she despised herself. Reasons or no reasons, that example is argument enough in favor of rating oneself low before God and His angels and all His other creatures. Esteeming herself the most insignificant little being in the universe because she so well knew the majesty of God, Mary was raised to be the highest; as the angel immediately announced to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy One, Who shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). No wonder that the Church celebrates her triumphal entry into heaven by this splendid festival of the Assumption, for it is not only fitting homage to our Queen, but it is the noblest praise of our most difficult virtue—self-abnegation.

And Mary consistently carried out her vocation of lowliness. When Joseph, her espoused husband, seeing the signs of her pregnancy, was amazed and confounded, a word from her, reciting the angel's message to her, would have vindicated her instantly; and would have relieved his mind of indescribable torture. But this word would have been spoken at the expense of her humility. Self-praise and self-esteem is the ban of our whole humanity, and Mary, who is

"Our tainted nature's solitary boast,"

could not bring herself to tell of the Holy Ghost's work in her behalf, which was to make her the Mother of the Redeemer of the world. Her meekness in this forced upon God, as we may reverently say, the sending of another angel (or perhaps the same great Gabriel) to Joseph for his enlightenment (Matt. i. 20). No wonder, then, that God should raise her up after death, and have her parade the heavens body and soul with her escort of angelic spirits, in fulfillment of the divine maxim: "Whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii. 14). Marveling at the lowliness of Mary, Father Thomas of Jesus thus addresses her: "O Mother of God, the angel of God called thee full of grace, and thou named thyself His handmaid, because thou didst behold in thyself none of the perfections which heaven's messenger perceived in thee. Thou didst carry in thy womb the 'expectation of the nations' (Gen. xlix. 10), but thou didst hide thy treasure, and the world esteemed thee not. How far off am I from thy way of feeling and of acting, O sacred virgin!" (*Sufferings of Jesus,* xxxv.) Well may we beg our glorified Queen to take pity on us, and to obtain for us the dispositions of heart necessary in order to prefer humiliation to exaltation, in imitation not only of herself, but of her divine Son. How can any of us fail to love humility, when we consider that the Son of the living God deliberately preferred to be mocked as a fool rather than to be honored as a prophet: "And Herod and his army set Him at nought, and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment, and sent Him back" on his journey to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 11). To Him was reserved another glorious journey, that of His ascension into the heavens. And this day we commemorate a like honor done to the lowly-minded Mother of Jesus, whose triumphal passage from the earth into the skies fills our souls with jubilation. The very angels might exclaim: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" (Cant. vi. 9.)

Nothing is better known than the folly of pride, and yet from the cradle to the grave we are proud; we strive for precedence; we envy the advancement of others; we argue for ourselves by contrast with others; handmaid or servant of another—we would rather die than so become or even so be called. Yet the infinite God and His immaculate Mother were happy to serve others; and they chose before all else the lowest places; and from the cradle to the grave they were glad to be humbled. Therefore Jesus and His Mother hold the highest places in paradise forever. Beloved Mother, be pitiful to me this day, and obtain for me by thy intercession the most difficult of all virtues, and the most necessary, sincere self-abasement for the honor of God, the Most High.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

I. Our Stainless Mother.

WE have a double joy in this feast, my brethren. For in it we share our Blessed Lady's glory as the only innocent one of human kind, innocent absolutely and from the beginning, enjoying the first fruits of the merits of her divine Son, and the plenitude of them. Furthermore we to-day celebrate, as Americans, her especial motherly protection, for by choice of our clergy and people, and by approval of the Holy See, she is the national patron of the United States of America. As celestial guardian of all our good things temporal and eternal, she is our chosen representative in the court of heaven. She is in God's sight our most loving and most powerful friend; yea she is the very Mother of our nation; she is peculiarly ours, perfectly ours.

It was in the month of May, 1846, that the Bishops of this country, being assembled in council at the city of Baltimore, adopted the Blessed Virgin as our country's patron in heaven, under the title of her Immaculate Conception. This solemn choice was duly ratified by the Apostolic See, at that time occupied by the illustrious pontiff Pius IX., then but recently elected. The Church of our nation was just beginning to expand into the great people of God which it has since become, growing from its then small dimensions, with one Archbishop and twenty-four Bishops, to our present vast proportions, thirteen ecclesiastical provinces and Archbishops, and nearly one hundred dioceses, with not far from twenty millions of Catholics.

From that day to this Catholic America has celebrated this feast with holy jubilation. Divine Providence did not select for us a day and patron by some great miracle, as in other lands and in past ages. They were chosen rather by God's majestic miracle of our nation's wondrous birth, and His divine purpose to make it the future stronghold of Christ's faith among men. The Holy Spirit inspired our prelates, and doubtless gave them some degree of foreknowledge of His designs, when they chose heaven's Immaculate Queen for our principal advocate with Jesus Christ. In the vast multitude of the redeemed, she is the only one who is saved before she is lost; and our immense commonwealth has so high a destiny among God's children that we are in need of, we might even say that we are entitled to, the most generous provision of help and guidance from above.

That God when He came among us should make sure of finding one unfallen spirit on earth, that He should adorn one shrine in which He could from the first feel entirely at home, was but fitting. And, sinners though we are, it is yet an element quite new in our joy, which is only that of recovered innocence, to know that original innocence and primitive guilelessness should also be ours by closest relationship with Mary's unique privilege. Our Redeemer on a solemn occasion, and in the presence of His disciples, declared to His Father: "All things are Thine, and Thine are Mine" (John xvii. 10); and He well might say to His Mother: all sweetness of love is Mine, and what is Mine is thine, for thou art an unspotted soul hearkening to heaven's call to a divine maternity. For indeed, brethren, the Mother of the Incarnate Word must be a great Mother, a most powerful Mother, most wise, most merciful; and none of these qualities could possess its fullness were she not the Immaculate Mother.

David sang: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God" (Ps. lxxxiii. 3). With even more certainty could Mary claim a heart full of joy, since her very flesh and blood were united to the Son of the living God in the union of His generation by the Holy Ghost, than which there is no conceivable union more close. It was in forecast of this supreme dignity, by which her human nature was to clothe her Son's soul with His wondrous bodily beauty, that she was from the first moment of her conception made safe and secure against all taint of sin. Jesus, the glory of heaven and the joy of its angels, gathered from Mary's heart that marvelous beauty of face and form to gaze upon which shall forever be the principal bliss of the elect, next to that of their beatific vision of the unveiled Deity Itself.

It might well have been supposed that God, in assuming created nature, would select some angel, a creature whose holiness was of superior lustre, to share in a miraculous way the identification of the infinite with finite existence. No, He reserved that honor, so entirely supreme among created beings, for a member of the human race; Mary of Nazareth was appointed to be His Mother. Her lustrous sanctity is the created complement of Her Son's uncreated sanctity. She is the Queen of angels no less than of men, and her spotlessness, though that of a member of our race, is the envy of the seraphs themselves.

It might be objected that the Mother of the Savior of a sin-stricken race should be herself a pardoned sinner, so that the foremost of human kind might know experimentally what it is to be under that awful ban which her Son was appointed to lift. But no. Mary knew sin by a higher knowledge than experimental knowledge. No penitent saint, not even Peter nor the Magdalene, could know sin by personal experience as Mary knew it by comparison of it with the purity of God: knowledge of wickedness second only to that which her Son had was granted to her, and with it an awful necessity was laid upon her to contrast it with the goodness of God. Besides this, although the plea of great penitents on our behalf is powerful with Christ, unspeakably more powerful is that of her whose life, while wholly ours, was too essentially blended with His own to be otherwise than immaculate, and who at the same time was too closely like Him in her sorrows to be barred from close union with Him in the work of atonement: Man of Sorrows, Mother of Sorrows. Hence the Holy Ghost inspired the aged Simeon to warn her: "Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thine own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed" (Luke ii. 34, 35). Thus in Mary's bosom "God found a home where the sinner finds rest" (Faber's hymn, *The Immaculate Conception*).

Grace and love and purity were granted to Mary in so great a degree that she would attract God to become her son. Jesus was indeed totally devoted to sinners, as He inspired His Apostle to proclaim: "Him Who knew no sin God hath made sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21), nevertheless, the stainless innocence of heaven was the proper condition of His Mother, who was to be so closely joined to Him in the divine plan of saving sinners—a spotless Redeemer all overwhelmed with our sinfulness demanded a spotless Mother, with a heart so pierced by a sympathetic atonement as to be worthy, if that could be possible, of union with His own.

Jesus gave up heaven itself to become a member of our race, a race so bad that its life was a hell upon earth. To show us how holy its life might be made, He chose to spend the first and longer part of His career in Mary's company at Nazareth. To this heaven on earth He bade farewell at the beginning of His public career, and passed into that seething mass of vileness, the life of His countrymen at that epoch. It was like leaving heaven for earth a second time, for Mary's company was to Jesus a paradise of delights, just as His presence was to her a foretaste of her future bliss in heaven. But as she was the closest companion of her Son in His mission to redeem us by His sufferings and His death, so her progress followed His from perfect joy to perfect sorrow. That the bitterness of Calvary should be perfectly full, it behooved our Savior to have the sweetness of Nazareth to part from and to give up. It was to stand out in His memory as a vivid contrast with the misery of His last years.

St. Paul's profession of wisdom has passed into a proverb of our religion: "I judged not myself to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). Add to the force of the Apostle in this utterance the intensity of the Mother, and you have a faint notion of Mary's right to the Church's acclaim of her as the Seat of Wisdom. A stainless mirror most perfectly reflects the light, and this entirely clean-hearted being saw God with beatific brightness (Matt. v. 8). In the deep night of our sinfulness the light of Mary's love for us shines fair and clear, the morning star of our hopes, the happy presage of the dawn of our eternal day.

Of divine intelligence our Lord said: "No one knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and to whom the Son will reveal Him" (Luke x. 22). Shall not that fortunate one be the Son's Mother? O how choice a redemption is the Immaculate Conception, by which every moment of life shines with the effulgence of love's wisdom. How truly may the Mother of Jesus affirm: I know Him because I love Him with a maternal heart. And how blessed is the thought that her gift of wisdom may be ours in a special degree, if we will but pray for it, for America is her land of special delectation.

The Son of the infinite God is rich enough both for Mary's amazing gifts and for our little ones. He is concerned not only for His Mother's perfect glory, but also for our sure salvation from hell: "Thy divine love is neither limited nor divided," exclaims Father Thomas of Jesus, "and Thou givest Thyself at the same time wholly to all and wholly to everyone in particular. I was no less present to Thy knowledge and love than the Blessed Virgin, even though she was so much more closely joined to Thee by the union of perfect charity" (*Sufferings of Jesus,* i., 6). Let the same be said of God's predestination of the nations of the world. Whatsoever favor any of them may have received from on high, such as the glory of many martyrs in the Church's early days, or a long succession of mighty teachers, it behooves us to aspire to the grace of rivalling any and all of them in the excellence of Christian virtue.

Especially should the Catholics of America feel that it is God's will that they should make provision for the conversion of their fellow-countrymen to the true Faith. Can we fail of success when the Captain General of our great mission is the royal Mother of the dispenser to the graces of conversion? The Apocalypse pictures her with her head encircled with twelve stars, and saintly writers tell us these represent Christ's twelve Apostles: "And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Apoc. xii. 1). America's advocate in paradise is Queen of apostles and Princess of missionaries. Every inspiration of zeal for conversions comes from the Holy Ghost through Mary. With what confidence may we not beseech her to obtain from her Son a deep flowing sympathy for our fellow-citizens, helplessly groping in the darkness of error, and an active zeal for their return to God's true Church. Let us also beg her to endow Catholics with a spotless citizenship, truly a model citizenship, whose honesty, purity, charity towards all, truthfulness, public spirit and earnest devotedness to the ideals of political liberty and social justice shall attract men to consider the claims of our holy religion. This day is the feast of our American citizenship. She who is Queen of heaven's commonwealth will enable us Catholics to make the United States a spectacle "of justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17), shining with her own reflected splendor, "Fair as the moon, bright as the sun" (Cant. vi. 9), among this world's peoples. Let us show earth and heaven that Mary has found in us a new Israel of God, and has taken root in a people which is destined to be one of the foremost among the elect of God (Ecclus. xxiv. 13).

II. The Virtue of Chastity.

"And she shall crush thy head" (Gen. iii. 15).

These words, my brethren, were spoken prophetically of the blessed Mother of God, whose Immaculate Conception we are this day celebrating. She puts her virginal heel upon the head of the serpent by giving mankind the Son of God incarnate for our redemption. Satan never ruled Mary—never for one instant; and he writhes beneath her feet when she answers our prayers for help in the stress of temptation. This is especially the case when we beseech her aid against the demon of impurity.

O my brethren, there is need of the assistance of this Queen of purity to save the men and women of our day from the monster of the deep pit. Especially do we need her example and her prayers for our young men and young women. Was there ever a time when danger was so imminent, so universal, and so multiform? Idleness is a chief danger, and it is longed for by many as the very land of plenty. Vice is made perfectly familiar by shows and newspapers—by the youth of our land it is better learned in all its fearful enticements than the tasks of school. Boys and girls in their early teens wander about the streets night and day at will, now alone with their budding iniquity, now in groups of contagious wickedness. Among them the most precious secret to be imparted is some new means of sensual indulgence. Things which not many years ago were banned from speech and even from thought, are now the choice morsels of ordinary conversation. Lives are blighted almost before they have begun. Reason's first use is search for degrading amusements. Many public relaxations—and this kind is the cheapest—are utterly corrupting, all the more fatally so because their poison is sweetened by art and by music. The traditional cautions against bad company, late hours, silly reading, immodest dress, are unregarded, nay, in many families they are no longer uttered. O Mary, most pure virgin, raise thy resistless voice in heaven to blast and destroy the public occasions of sin, and exert thy power with God to counteract the secret ones that are leading so many unwary souls to eternal destruction. O make this feast of thy unspotted virtue a day of fierce battle against vice in all its forms and all its allurements, a day of victory sweeping and complete, over thy ancient foe, the demon of unchastity.

It is difficult to realize the insidiousness of the devil's attempts upon a Christian's chastity, which he hates with a malignity as fierce as it is cunning. But look at Calvary, my brethren, and there behold your refuge from not only the evil spirits, but also from your own selves. Do you see Jesus Crucified? He has conquered hell and the devil and all turpitude by His agony and His death for our sakes. Do you see His Mother? She is immaculately pure, and to her has Jesus given us over to be cared for when He says: "Woman, behold thy son;" and it is to each of us that He speaks when He says: "Behold thy mother" (John xix. 26, 27). Do you see Mary Magdalene standing there? She is placed next to the sorrowful mother, standing in a high place of honor. She is our model of repentance from unchastity, a pattern of truest contrition as well as a token of the readiness and fullness of the pardon of Jesus. Behold in those two Marys, my brethren, the living witnesses of God's goodness to men for the preserving or the recovering of their chastity, for one is His unstained virgin Mother, and the other is the masterpiece of His merciful forgiveness.

You should ask your beloved Mother to obtain for you the gift of candor in your confessions—not so much when there is actual sin to be confessed, for then you are surely explicit enough, as when you reveal serious temptations; and especially in asking counsel about company and amusements. Always when this vice of impurity is in question, one should go beyond the statement of positively certain matter for confession; he should go beyond the express requirements of the sacrament, and should voluntarily open all the circumstances to the priest, and obtain direction. Brethren, our poor humanity needs heaven's best help and Mary's most fervent prayers against this vice of lust, for it is exceedingly prevalent. Tell us: what vice is more characteristic of robust early manhood than carnal indulgence? What is more notorious than the weaknesses of old age in this respect? How often does it happen that a man seemingly most virtuous, in a brief interval of carelessness, has been overtaken by a temptation which has made a shameful reprobate of him.

In former times every king had his court jester. This, we may suppose, was not merely that he might enjoy a silly pleasure in the fool's maunderings, but especially that he might learn wisdom by contrast with folly. For a like reason the ancient Spartans made a slave drunk, that their sons might learn the infamy of intoxication by a spectacular lesson. O you who have maintained your chastity unsullied, look around you and learn its heavenly worth by contrast with the foulness of lust which is evident everywhere. And, O you who have been rescued from the unclean vice by God's grace of repentance, understand by the very memory of your former misery the glory and beauty of a chaste life. And let us one and all beseech the Immaculate Mother of God this day, to help us to avoid all dangerous occasions, and to watch and pray against temptations.

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

I. The Intercession of the Saints.

"You have come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the Church of the firstborn, who are written in the heavens, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect" (Heb. xii. 22, 23).

SAINT SULPICIOUS SEVERUS says of St. Martin of Tours, that he commanded a raging conflagration to cease, and it instantly obeyed him; he was a saint, and ruled the elements like his Master. St. Francis of Assisi marshalled the beasts of the field and the fishes of the stream to hear him discourse of God; he was a saint, and ruled the dwellers of the woods and of the waters. But in both these saints, and in all saints and angels, there is the higher power of ruling men by the might of God's love. God's saints dominate their fellowmen, because God is with them in their sainthood. And their holiness is one with our own, however immensely greater it may be in the accumulated treasures of their heroic lives. To each of them, through their Master and ours, did God grant His sovereignty, as the Psalmist testifies: "Thou hast set him over all the works of Thy hands; Thou hast subjected all things under his feet" (Ps. viii. 7, 8). We see some men under the feet of Satan, and some groveling under the wheels of the world's profane chariot. But God's elect are under the control of saints and angels, and, as little brothers and sisters, they are happily led onward to their home by their elders, panting with eager anticipations of the delightful plenty of their Father's house and the torrent of His joys (Ps. xxxv. 9).

No difference between Catholics and non-Catholics is more essential than in the obliviousness of our separated friends to this wonderful dogma of the union of this life and the hereafter in the radiant borderland of the intercession of the saints. We Catholics feel heaven to be very near to earth, holy angels and beatified men ready at hand to join and aid us in our upward strivings toward divine things; whereas Protestants set heaven far off; it is beyond the most distant margins of their religious life, all of its happy spirits are barred off from them and wholly inaccessible to their yearning hearts. How little do they comprehend the meaning of our text's divine teaching: "You are come to Mt. Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the Church of the firstborn, who are written in the heavens, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect" (Heb. xii. 22, 23).

The Catholic Church teaches that we can converse with the glorious dead and with the mighty angels, and that we do so by asking their prayers for us. It is in an atmosphere of faith that we recognize them, and by the instinct of faith that we feel at one with them, appreciating that all of God's friends are one family, whose unity embraces earth and purgatory and heaven, and whose medium of intercommunion is the joint activity of all spirits upwards toward God—the common life of prayer. "Out of sight, out of mind," is the proverb of reproach of weak friendship. Shall we let it apply to our departed friends, who have overcome death and the grave and passed from our earthly and visible presence, to a heavenly presence round about us and within us? Because they have gone to the living God, shall they have entirely departed away from us, His immortal children? In this life friends separated by distance are united in spirit by love and by prayer, and also by exchange of written messages or tidings brought by mutual friends. Now, every time we lift our souls to the company of God's saints, He Himself plays the part of the mutual friend; every time we read the lives or the writings of the saints, these heavenly messages bear their tokens of love to us.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity......; for there the Lord hath commanded blessing and life for evermore" (Ps. cxxxii. 1-3). How pleasant, indeed, for wayfaring souls to rest after the toilsome day and the dusty road in the spiritual refreshment of prayer to God in company with His holy ones! While on earth they loved men's company in order to do them good, and now that heaven's bliss has made them yet more perfect instruments of good, they seek out our company to soothe us with the comfort of their heavenly thoughts, and with closer and closer introduction to the society of our Redeemer. This common sharing of virtues and merits between brethren in probation and brethren in triumph is a precious part of our hopes. For the essence of it we rely upon Christ; He is, again essentially, "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). As He lives by the Father, so does He communicate His Father's life and His own life to all who sit at His banquet of the Eucharist (John vi. 58). Sharing His own virtues and joys with us, He wills that His friends shall do likewise with their brethren, both while they are here below and after they have been taken up to heaven.

How sweet the dignity of those wonderful beings, those flowers of God's heavenly paradise, the angels! The joy of God in His own infinite beauty was in them expressed, for they are more strictly like Him than our best humanity. And yet, perfect as they are, they were not made perfect for themselves alone, but for us also, who are a new kind of creation, a little lower than the angels (Ps. viii. 6), but destined to be the brethren even of God made man. How noble is man, since these spirits, with all their gracious beauty, are employed by God in the service of man. "Are they not all ministering spirits," exclaims the Apostle, "sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14.) Strength, life, order,

"In beauteous showers outstreamed;
And realms of newly-fashioned space
With radiant angels beamed."
—(Faber's *Hymn of the Angels.*)

If our tutor he one of these—and we know that each of us has such an instructor—how large must be our soul's capacity for heavenly wisdom!

We read of St. Peter that he was miraculously released from prison by the intervention of an angel. And when he applied in dark night to the door of John Mark's house, the devout souls within could not believe that it was his own very self: "They said: It is his angel" (Acts xii. 15). Think of the wealth of a man who can call an angel of the living God his own angel! And if you say that this was because Peter was an Apostle, we answer, even so; it is much to know that even our great leaders on earth are thus favored. Yet not Apostles only, but everyone of us, down to our smallest children, has his angel, as is emphatically claimed for them by the King of Angels: "For I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 10). Here is a friend who never says good-bye to us. He is our heavenenly sponsor at baptism, and He treads our roads and fords our streams with us (Tob. xii.), and He at last brings us home safe and sound to God our Father. He counts our good deeds and transfers the tally in letters of gold to the book of life (Tob. xii. 12). When total shipwreck threatens us, He stands beside us, and it is His tender accent that says: "Fear not!" (Acts xxvii. 24) and lands us safely beyond temptation's devouring billows. And if we are cast out by our fellowmen and reduced to the direst extremity of penury, covered with sores and perishing of hunger, at last it is said of each of us, as it was said of Lazarus, the man who was a pauper: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke xvi. 22).

If, as all say, a man is known by his company, then our race has a perfect nobility, for the wondrous spirits of God's court constantly associate with us; they envy one another the privilege of serving us. They chide and soothe and elevate us by turns, sleeplessly guarding us against our foes. Their strength and love and truth finally prepare us to stand before their King and ours at the dread accounting with which eternity begins. Their custody of us is often spoken of in Holy

Writ as something warlike: "The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them" (Ps. xxxiii. 8). Penitents—and which of us will claim exemption from that classification—are specially privileged, because their sorrow is not only made their own joy (John xvi. 20), but it increases the ecstasies even of their angels; for hear our Lord's strong words: "I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance" (Luke xv. 7). To these spirits, whose glory is so true a reflection of the Divine Majesty, we are, of course, like children; but children of their God and brothers of their King, the Son of God. Ever at your side your guardian angel stands, and he sees through your waywardness deep into your future supreme felicity. It is through your soul that his gaze is fixed upon the eternal years. The very humility that falls upon you as you mark the contrast between you and him, delights him with a love for you like a mother's, anticipating, as it does, those future ages when he and you shall be happy equals in the commonwealth of God's paradise. Devotion to the angels, and especially to the guardian angel, is therefore a form of religion most directly practical, without ceasing to be exceedingly unearthly.

It deals with heaven through supernatural personages all our own and all absorbed in our interests. Their prayerful life in God is the atmosphere all about us; and they are the official pleaders and advocates who are associated closely with the greatest friend we have with Christ, namely, our Mother Mary, the Queen of the angels. How can one rise in the morning and fail to salute His angel, that sleepless watcher of the perilous night; how lie down to sleep without saying at least a few words of affection and of thanks to the angel, who has guided his steps and cleansed his motives through the noisy hours of the day?

And what of those other heavenly friends of ours who are, in a way, closer to us than even the angels? What of those among God's saints who are our name saints or otherwise our special patrons? Once, like ourselves, men and women striving and struggling in the press of human misery and sin, repentance and relapse, in the hot sun of prosperity and the icy chill of adversity, they are now fathoming and adoring the infinite bliss of God in its very essence. These, we insist, are more closely our kindred than are even the angels. The claim of brotherhood is a claim of a sweeter equality even than that of angelic guardianship, and it is mine toward every saint in heaven. "Keep your spirit in the heavenly Jerusalem," exhorts St. Francis de Sales, "amid those glorious streets which you will find ever-resounding with God's praises. Gaze upon that marvelous variety of saints, and ask them how they got there" (*Letters to Persons in Religion,* Mackey, p. 443).

II. The Souls in Purgatory.

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me" (Job xix. 21).

Holy Church, my brethren, whilst she opens to our joyful gaze the happy hosts of heaven on All Saints' Day, and bids us confidently trust that in God's good time we shall join them, likewise hastens to appeal to our sympathy for the souls in purgatory. All Souls' Day immediately follows All Saints' Day. The Church uses the words of our text to voice the sad plea of our friends and kindred, and indeed that of all other spirits, imprisoned in that sad house of detention—words uttered by the holy man Job amid his trials and his distresses; and she plaintively repeats them during this month of November, a time specially devoted to their interests.

The dogma which vitalizes our loving devotion to these souls thus sorrowfully standing outside heaven's gate, is that in the next world there is a purgatory, or a middle state of souls. They are kept there for a time undergoing penitential sufferings in preparation for heaven. They are completing the atonement due to their sins, an expiation foolishly delayed or culpably ignored whilst they were in the time of their probation on earth. And the Church assures us that these souls, all trembling with eagerness to enter heaven, and at the same time all saturated with the painful sense that they are not yet fit to go there, can truly be helped by our prayers, and especially by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Such is the Catholic teaching about purgatory.

What a privilege, therefore, is ours—to say prayers, receive communions, and have Masses offered, which shall unbind the fetters that hinder friends of God from entering the realms of eternal bliss. O Savior of the world! Thou didst say to Thy crucified companion on Calvary: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43); say the same blessed words *this* day, we humbly beseech Thee, to our relatives and friends in purgatory, and also to those poor spirits there who are without any Catholic acquaintances to remember them—say those blessed words to all the souls in purgatory.

My brethren, consider the condition of a soul in purgatory. It loves God tenderly, and yet is wholly unable to profit by that best of treasures—divine love. It is like a man who has a thousand gold pieces, wandering solitary and alone in a vast desert. That soul, theologians tell us, may pray for others, but not for itself; it can only helplessly breathe out its agony in sighs of patient submission to the requirements of infinite justice. A beggar in the most pitiful condition has a tongue left to wail for bread, and the very sight of his misery arouses compassion; and who on this weary earth is so unfortunate as to be unable to crave heaven's pity for his misfortunes? But the only recourse of a soul in purgatory is resignation, and a resignation utterly mute: that, and the prayerful remembrance of his friends still in this life.

You may, perhaps, say that there can be no great suffering in mere postponement of joy, nor even in the positive and inflicted pains of the middle state, since it is surely to be followed by the state of heavenly bliss. We answer that you would not so speak if you knew what the longing of a loving heart towards God is in the hereafter. "They suffer the privation of God" says the Council of Florence; and this is the hardest of all pains. Tell, if you can, the torment of a soul separated from the body, impetuously desiring (as says Alban Butler) to attain to God its only object of love. "It seems just about to enjoy Him, drawn with unmeasurable force by His infinite charms, thrust towards Him by an inward force of inconceivable power: yet violently repelled and held back." What a calamitous condition! What an appeal to our hearts' deepest sympathy.

In purgatory the best words and thoughts and deeds of even heroes of God have no worth whatsoever in His sight, and are no plea for mercy, nay, they are not capable of being offered: one single virtue is of avail, namely, the virtue of suffering with a wearily long drawn-out patience till the divine reckoning of justice has been fully covered and discharged: unless, my brethren, you and I intervene with our prayers and our sacrifices. Of all created things, the souls in purgatory are in the terrible state of condignity; our Savior's words have come true: "The night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4)—every soul there can but suffer, that alone. The difference between dealing with God as with one who listens and answers, reproves and is mollified, argues and questions with our arguing and questioning; and dealing with God inaccessible, silent, inexorable, exacting, with God Who has laid His fire upon you and gone His way that it may burn itself out upon you—behold the difference between this life's probation and purgatory. As fire burns, so does God execute justice in purgatory.

What, therefore, should we strive most to realize about the holy souls? as they are affectionately called. We should realize that they await our help. They look to us, my brethren. Of many of the Christians listening to me, words such as these are now spoken in purgatory with an agony of desire: Why does he wait so long? Can he not remember that for much of my sinfulness he too is to blame, for we lived and sinned in company? Can he not remember that he is indebted to me for much of the faith, hope, and love that shall make safe his own salvation?—and that if he were in my place and I in his, I would storm heaven with my prayers for him, with my communions, my Masses, my rosaries, and my self-denials? Brethren, those souls listen for your footfall outside the dark gate, wholly dependent on you. Remember, too, that multitudes who are your suppliants there are far above you in God's love; though spotted with faults as yet unatoned for, they are none the less in their heart's care close friends of God; and in liberating them you place powerful advocates for yourself before the throne of everlasting justice. Will you so leave them that the Psalmist's bitter words shall rise to their lips? "I waited for one that would console me, and I found none" (Ps. lxviii. 21). Herein he voices our Redeemer's most awful bereavement, His desolation of heart in the Garden of Olives; it is precisely like that of the souls in purgatory: "Let this chalice pass from Me!" (Luke xxii. 42.) And the evangelist immediately adds: "And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him." The angel's part with Jesus in the Garden is our part with the souls in purgatory.

And now during this time of the year we lend these silent sufferers our tongues, eloquent as they are with our heart's sympathy. We voice their yearnings for paradise. Our patriarch Job in his worst despondency could truthfully boast: "I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame; I was the father of the poor" (Job xxix. 15, 16). My brethren, there is no boast possible to human nature so honorable as that of being thus tender-hearted. So may you be a tongue to those voiceless sufferers. Their souls, waiting in painful darkness and longing, may by your prayers be brought nearer and nearer to their day of light and freedom. Your devotions, offerings, sacrifices, self-denials for them, that is to say your prayers, will bear their unspoken messages of love to the throne of grace. All this is what is meant by praying for the souls in purgatory, and especially by having the holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for their happy repose.

Some of them, of course, are close to the end of their sufferings. But the very nearness of the waters of everlasting life, placed just beyond their reach, only the more cruelly tantalizes their divine thirst. Shall we not help this pitiable class to take the final step? Perhaps a very dear friend of yours is one of them; the cup of cold water is at his famishing lips, but he cannot drink it—unless you draw him towards it. And you remember our Savior's touching promise to those who thus minister to human affliction—He seems to be directly addressing the poor souls in purgatory: "Whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in My name, because you belong to Christ: amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mark ix. 40).

Other friends of ours are just beginning an immense period of suffering, the penalty of a lifelong course of vice, all but ending in hell, from which a tardy repentance has but barely saved them. They have been saved from eternal punishment, but they must still satisfy for the temporal or temporary punishment due to mortal sin, after the eternal guilt has been wiped away by the blood of Christ in the Sacrament of Penance. Shall we not open our souls to their grief-stricken cry for pity? Or shall we be that hard-hearted friend of whom the Psalmist complains: "I waited for one that would console me, and I found none" (Ps. lxviii. 21). God forbid that any friend of ours in purgatory should say such things of you or me.

Many of us little appreciate the seriousness of offending God by venial sins. Remember Moses on Mount Pisgah. He was at the end of his life, and he was full of merits, a mighty servant of God, the faithful shepherd of God's people. But years before he had committed a venial sin of lack of confidence in God (Num. xx. 12). He had repented instantly, and instantly he had been forgiven; but he must atone for it, yes, even unto the end of his life. He is not allowed to lead the people across the Jordan, but upon the rock of Pisgah he sits desolate, his eyes weeping tears of grief, gazing helplessly in the sunset of his days upon the promised land. One venial sin puts chains upon his feet, and stops his entering there, after forty years of toiling and suffering for God's honor and His people's welfare:—no, he must have his purgatory, and it is given him in this world instead of in the next. Many a good man is thus afflicted by divine justice, yet for the most of men their expiation is in purgatory. We may alleviate and abridge their pains by our prayers.

We not seldom read about a saint that he refused himself everything that he might give all to the poor. So do we meet with merciful Christians so moved by the thought of the poor sufferers in purgatory, that they offer all their merits to God for their deliverance. And indeed if these souls could pray to us they would so move us that our tears would seem to God like sacraments of pity. Each of those sufferers would commit to us this prayer to be offered to God in his stead: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name; the just wait for me until Thou reward me" (Ps. cxli. 8). How pleasing to God is such a go-between office of love! Call to mind what the Son of God will say to His elect at the Last Judgment: "Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you......I was in prison and you visited Me" (Matt. xxv. 34, 36). If the Lord rewards with the eternal possession of His Father's kingdom that rare and very beautiful charity of visiting prisoners, saying a few words of cheer and hope, bearing messages to and from friends, bidding them remember the imprisonment and death of their divine Redeemer for their sake, exhorting them to contrition and to confession—if thus pitifully helping those whose prison is earthly, and whose pains are the inflictions of their fellow mortals, is rewarded so bountifully in Paradise, how much rather will Christ recompense those who bring comfort to souls shut up in the prison of infinite justice, and who are agonized with the misery of unutterable remorse.

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